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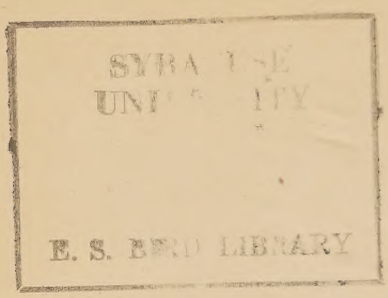

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The Memoirs of

PRINCE MAX OF BADEN

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Georg Heinz von Wachs

Maximilian, Prince of Baden, 1867–

The Memoirs of
PRINCE MAX OF BADEN

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION BY
W. M. CALDER AND
C. W. H. SUTTON

In two volumes

VOL. I

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

MUCH that is in this book must fail to carry conviction in England.

On both sides there are bitter experiences that colour one's judgment, and prevent it from attaining that ultimate clarity which it is striving after. Many are the controversies which will only be settled by the Verdict of History; and for such a verdict the times are not yet ripe—of this I am certain. But there is one truth which I believe myself to have established in these 'Memoirs,' and it is of importance for the advance of humanity that this truth should come to be recognised:

The protagonists had, in the year 1915, in 1916, in 1917, and in 1918, golden opportunities of bringing about a peace of general contentment. This peace would have earned the protests of the Jingoes in all the countries concerned, and the gratitude of their peoples for centuries to come. It often seemed as if the leading men on both sides were on the point of taking the decisive step; and yet it never was taken. There was no lack of insight; it was a want of power to withstand the surging passions which had been aroused. To-day we may lament the obstinacy and the blindness of the Jingoes, but it would be more truthful to admit that it was the liberal-minded men who were too weak to follow out the course which they recognised to be the right one.

We ought never to tire of reminding the world of the blessings that were lost to it when the belligerent nations spurned their great opportunity.

Had a timely and a just peace been concluded —we should to-day have a real *League of Nations*, not merely the name and the outward show, and America would be with us.

We should to-day have *Disarmament, not in Germany only*.

The Freedom of the Seas would be no mere Ideal given up and shelved for the present, but would be the keystone of a General Security Pact. The temptation to make a wrong use of sea-power would have been done away with, and with it one of the strongest temptations to go to war.

Continental frontiers would have been drawn in accordance with ethnographic fact, and not with a view to satisfying the strategic aspirations of certain favoured nations.

Aggressive Imperialism would in fact be dead and buried.

Thus the energies of a pacified Europe would have been set free to work at the task of building up a *Class-Peace*. Such a peace has got to be established, otherwise we shall be left without any power of resistance to the gospel of disruption which is being proclaimed from the East, and shall be unable to give to the great Russian people that example and that hope which it needs in its hour of trial and servitude.

Bismarck once said : ' The statesman has not to *make* history, but if ever in the events around him

he hears the sweep of the mantle of God, then he must jump up and catch at its hem.' In the World War there was none that jumped and caught at the hem, and yet it was many a time within our grasp.

The past year was everywhere a year of sterility, in internal and in external politics.

I fancy the sweep of the divine mantle will be heard once again before long. May the responsible statesmen be vigilant and be prepared.

(SIGNED) MAX, PRINZ VON BADEN.

January 1928.

NOTE BY THE TRANSLATORS

THE following translation of *Erinnerungen und Dokumente*, by Prince Max of Baden, has been authorized by the author. Passages translated into German (sometimes in an abbreviated form) from English originals have in most cases been given in their original English form. In a few cases it has proved impossible to trace the English originals; in these cases the German version has been retranslated as literally as possible into English. Some corrections to be made in the next German edition have been incorporated in the translation. The translation of Volume I is by W. M. Calder; that of Volume II by C. W. H. Sutton.

W. M. C.
C. W. H. S.

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PREFACE

Not long after the Revolution, when it became clear that an essential share of the blame for the German collapse would be ascribed to me, I decided to give a public account of my stewardship. I soon realized that I could only explain the actual connection of events both to the German people and to myself if I submitted the charges made against me to a careful examination, and also made up my mind to understand the point of view of my opponents.

As early as 1919 I found myself compelled to define my attitude to the disputed happenings of 9th November. I did this in a publication which was printed in all the newspapers but was virtually hushed up in the controversial literature.

In the study and self questioning of eight years I think I have got as near the truth as I can.

In the course of my work my apologia has grown into something different—an account based on original sources of that fateful epoch of the history of Germany in which I was involved. I put my trust in the weight of the facts.

I began in December 1918 and continued in the next few years to write down my personal reminiscences ; for editing them and supplementing them by a study of the historical sources I am deeply in the debt of Herr Kurt Hahn. I feel bound also to thank the other helpers without whose self-sacrifice the work could not have been completed : Frau Professor Richter for her critical examination and preparation of the material, Frl. M. Rokol for arranging and controlling the documents, Frl. Dr. Rinck-Wagner for checking the historical sources, helping with the footnotes and making the index.

Space prevents my stating my indebtedness to all those who have stood by me with advice, information and constructive criticism. But I should like to make special mention of my gratitude to Geheimrat Oncken; in the general arrangement of the book and its division into sections his advice has been invaluable to me.

MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN.

SALEM, *April* 1927.

PART I

CHAPTER I

MY WORK FOR PRISONERS OF WAR

When the war broke out, I was on the Headquarters Staff of the Fourteenth Army Corps, to which the troops from Baden were assigned. In the autumn of 1914 my health compelled me to return home. As soon as I had somewhat recovered, I placed myself at the disposal of the Red Cross of Baden. The work I took up was the care of prisoners of war.

Our work for foreign prisoners and the task of helping our own nationals in captivity came into no real conflict; rather their indissoluble connection became clearer with every day that passed. On the mere strength of the fact that people were taking trouble to help enemy prisoners in Germany, we were able to obtain precise and speedy answers to our questions from enemy countries, and plead successfully for efforts involving difficulty and trouble.

But it is false psychology to hold that considerations of expediency keep thrusting themselves into charitable work. Human need calls for first aid, and first aid is given when it can be given. 'Even in war to love your enemy is the mark of loyalty to the Lord.' I took up this phrase of Sigmund Schulze's in 1917, and added the warning clause, 'And also the mark of loyalty to Germany.'[1]

At first I was occupied with questions affecting German prisoners in Russia, and Russian prisoners in Germany. Here I was able to make use of my family relationship with the Russian Court, in order to lodge complaints. I was in a

[1] This sentence occurs in one of the first appeals of the Enquiry and Assistance Bureau for Germans abroad and Foreigners in Germany, which was founded by Sigmund Schulze and Frl. Dr. Rotten in 1914. This Bureau was sometimes supported and used, sometimes obstructed, by the authorities, and continued its very beneficent work till the end of the war.

position to invoke assistance which was still capable at that time of producing astonishingly great results in Russia. Presently my help was claimed in work for the welfare of German prisoners in Britain and France, and for British and French prisoners in Germany.

My cousin, the Queen of Sweden, forwarded my correspondence to Russia. In doing so she laid special emphasis on my complaints. I cannot describe how much she suffered under every misfortune that befel her German fellow-countrymen and her German home.

I maintained a brisk correspondence with the Crown Princess of Sweden, the gifted and warm-hearted daughter of the Duke of Connaught, and grand-daughter of Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia. With model neutrality, she toiled without respite for German and British prisoners. This noble Princess, alas ! died too early. Both in her old and in her new home she was accorded a rich measure of love and reverence.

I received a large amount of help from humanitarians in Switzerland. They never tired of the labour of forwarding German requests to France and French requests to Germany.

My efforts to ascertain the fate of individuals were continued up to October 1918. At times they piled up a heavy load of work. In the course of this work I found myself obliged to think out the root problems of prisoner of war policy : the questions of reprisals, exchange procedure, and the mental and physical health of the prisoners.

At the very beginning of my work with the Red Cross, I came into close touch with Professor Partsch, the head of the Baden Prisoner of War Organization. As a teacher of law, Professor Partsch has his own distinguished place in the history of German science ; after the war he became one of the champions of Germany's rights. But in the memory of thousands he will live as a great friend of humanity. Up to the day of his sudden death on the 30th March, 1925, he displayed a strength which his friends thought inexhaustible. He died, before he was fifty, a victim of the war and of his own humanity, which never knew how to spare itself. I

shall never forget how obstacles which appeared insuperable simply crumpled up before his drive and energy. He had a way of saying, ' That is wrong, or foolish ' ; and war mentality and the prejudices which spring from it would melt away.

In his dealings with the authorities Partsch was able to make good use of my help. In his public appeals my name helped him to an almost embarrassing extent.[1]

I did my best to help with the constructive work which the American Y.M.C.A. was doing in the prisoners' camps of all the belligerent countries. I was kept continually *au courant* by the reports of the delegates Harte and Hoffmann. I often pleaded for their requests in person at the War Office. This organization succeeded in accomplishing most of what it took in hand. One of its finest successes was the establishment of the camp libraries in Russia.

Considerations of national dignity often prevented us from granting obvious alleviations. We had to be on our guard lest our opponents should draw false conclusions from sensible concessions. But national dignity demanded no less that no one should cast up to us that cruelty and senseless hardship were inflicted in our prison camps. It still fills me with great satisfaction that by the statement of many who were interned in Baden camps and by the expert testimony of neutral visitors none of our Baden camps merited this reproach. In the rest of Germany too, when one thinks of the enormous mass of close on four million prisoners which we had on our hands by the end of the war, the number of exceptions on which we look back with shame was extraordinarily small. But it is just those who love their country in the right spirit who are distressed by the few bad cases which actually occurred. My anger at such cases was always the greater that they were so unnecessary, in view of the well-known attitude of the Kaiser, and his power, which

[1] Prof. Partsch and I issued an appeal for the collection of a fund to help Baden soldiers who were prisoners of war or had returned home from captivity. This ' Prince Max Fund ' reached a very considerable sum, thanks to the generosity of many people in Baden, especially the manufacturers of the whole country.

at the beginning of the war was still unbroken, to discipline even opinion. Again and again, in private conversations, His Majesty had not been backward in impressing the need for *caritas inter arma*. But no great directing utterance was forthcoming, and over-zealous patriots were allowed to imagine that favour could be earned by the avoidance of what they were accustomed to call ' sentimentality ' in the treatment of prisoners. The acting Generals in Command, who were responsible for the prison camps in their areas, were subordinate under the War Constitution to His Majesty alone. The Prussian War Office had no power to issue orders inside the camps. It had often to proceed by devious routes to give effect to its will. Its will was good. I have had to fight out stiff battles with the War Office, but I never knew it to reject the ground principle that humanity and patriotism alike forbid all hardships which are not imposed by military needs. Looking back I can heartily corroborate a phrase used by Bishop Bury [1] on the occasion of a visit to Germany during the war : ' Germany's War Office is her most humane authority.'

In Germany the prisoner problem was complicated beyond solution, not only by the countless nationalities which met in our camps, but even more by the shortness of our supplies and of medical and hygienic necessities. Often what was regarded as desirable simply could not be done, until the War Office succeeded in regulating the distribution of parcels from the homes of the prisoners on an ordered basis.

The choice of Colonel, afterwards General Friedrich, as Head of the Prisoner of War Department in the War Office was admirable. His ability and knowledge of men, his impartial judgment, and his kindliness gave him a special fitness for his difficult office.

I consider it a piece of good fortune that I found this excellent fellow-countryman in a position where it was so important to meet with understanding.

[1] During the war he was Anglican Bishop of North and Central Europe. Unlike many other divines, he never imposed a moratorium on the Sermon on the Mount.

Common experiences which I can never forget bind me to Friedrich. We met several times in Switzerland in order to visit the institutions which the Swiss had established for exchanged prisoners in the Cantons of St. Gall, Appenzell, Glarus, Graubuenden and beside the Lake of Lucerne. We were both full of admiration for the energy, good sense and warmheartedness of the Swiss.

For a nation at war the word ' neutral ' is not always associated with kindly thoughts. We met with uncritical, even servile partisanship for the cause of the enemy, we saw yeoman service rendered to his propaganda of lies, and not least, when ill luck began to dog our arms in 1918, we met with a malice which hurt most when it came from communities akin to us. To-day, when I look from my residence at Salem towards the heaven-favoured country of our neighbours, the better memories prevail, and I like to think of a special benefit which I owe to my association with people like Dr. and Frau Bohny, and Drs. Schwytzer and Ney. They made a man more capable of resisting the war frenzy and its claim to dispense with common sense, humanity and justice.

The business of prisoner exchange brought me into touch with General Friedrich in Constance too. I went there as often as I could when the trains came in with severely wounded Germans from Lyons by way of Switzerland and when severely wounded Englishmen and Frenchmen were sent home. In Constance Major von Polentz acted as representative of the War Office. He succeeded in winning the profound respect of friend and foe alike and also of the Swiss neutrals. The name ' Roi de Constance ' which the French gave him is significant.

I described in a letter to the Chancellor the overpowering impression made on me when the first party of severely wounded Germans arrived. We stood anxiously awaiting broken, crippled men and searched for words to give the right note of consolation. The train steamed in and we were caught up in a burst of cheering which lifted up *our* hearts. ' What, after all, is one man's sorrow, if only Germany wins ! '

On the occasion of one of these exchanges I came into conflict with the War Office. It had been arranged that parties of German and of French officers were to be sent home simultaneously. The Frenchmen had already reached Constance, when our authorities learnt that France had not fulfilled her part of the bargain ; and the poor, sick men were told on the eve of reaching their freedom that they must return to captivity. I appealed by telegram to the Kaiser and begged him to put the French authorities to shame by an act of magnanimity. He appreciated the point at once, and I was able to bring a message to the despairing French officers that nothing stood in the way of their proceeding on their journey. When I took leave of them I appealed to the chivalry which demanded that they should make it known at home that they owed their freedom solely to the magnanimity of our Kaiser, the most maligned man in France. It was no long time before the German officers reached home.

The Chancellor entirely approved of the steps taken to procure this act of grace.[1]

I must, however, admit that in dealing with France the policy of reprisals in the treatment of prisoners could not altogether be dispensed with. The Commanders of our camps often helped matters by inducing the prisoners under their charge to write home that threatened measures had been carried out which had in fact been ordered but had not been put into operation.

Against Britain reprisals became less and less necessary. Among the men at the top in Britain there was certainly no lack of the will to do the right thing. Bad instances in individual cases can be pointed to ; the essential blame for these belongs to the temper created by the yellow press.[2]

[1] ' Accept my special congratulations on your application to His Majesty to have the French officers and N.C.O.s sent home without reciprocity. This fine deed of humanity should open the world's eyes to the moral stature of the so-called Huns and barbarians.' (13th March, 1915.)

[2] The most prominent part in the agitation against German prisoners and all who showed them kindness was taken by *John Bull*. It is sad to think that this newspaper, at the time when its denunciations were at their fiercest, was able to announce that its subscribers had reached the million.

But justice demands that it should be put on record that in Britain no brutal deed was done and no coarse word spoken without decent people springing up in indignant protest. The Quakers [1] above all never lowered the Red Cross flag. Their courageous stand prepared the way for Dr. Markel, who became the great champion of the German prisoners.

In dealing with Russia we were in a very difficult position. Unconscionable carelessness frequently went hand in hand with that cruelty which breaks out so unaccountably in the Slav character and often alternates with genuine kindness of heart. In the result we saw the most frightful atrocities of the war. Here reprisals were senseless. The suffering of his own fellow-countrymen weighed little with the Russian against his craving for revenge which, especially after German victories, could not be curbed. I always tried to dissuade the War Office from measures of retaliation against Russia, because they would only recoil a hundredfold on our own countrymen.

In Russia only the intervention of influential individuals could bring speedy relief. On one dramatic occasion I was able to move the Dowager Empress to an act of saving intervention. An Austrian officer, who was innocent, had been condemned to death as a spy. On the day on which he was to be hanged the Dowager Empress procured his pardon.

The conditions at the building of the Murman railway have often been described. There ill-clad and ill-fed German prisoners were sent to the hardest forced labour in icy cold. They died of scurvy by thousands. There were few doctors, no nurses, and a total lack of the most necessary medicines. Devils in the shape of foremen lashed dying men to their work.[2]

[1] The Emergency Committee of the Society of Friends for Helping Germans, Austrians and Hungarians in Distress gave its special attention to the civil prisoners, while Dr. Markel took charge of the prisoners of war.

[2] One can understand why our War Office suppressed the report of the Swedish sisters on the conditions at the Murman railway ; it would have broken the hearts of the unfortunate men's relatives.

The American Embassy, which had been entrusted with the protection of German prisoners in Russia, made no effective intervention, but carried out its trust in a slack and heartless fashion. It pains me to say this when I remember the Americans with whom I worked in Germany.

I appealed in the strongest and angriest terms to the conscience of the Grand Duchess Konstantine.[1] She invoked the help of my uncle, Prince Alexander of Oldenburg, who was at the head of the Russian Sanitary Service. He went on a tour of inspection and it is especially thanks to him that German prisoners suffering from scurvy were sent to a warm climate.

But the decisive credit for putting an end to the hell in the Murman area belongs, I believe, to the daughter of the Swedish Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Fräulein Else Brändström.[2] She is one of the great women of our time. Only a woman's strength and a woman's goodness could attempt and accomplish what she did. She was rightly called the good angel of the German prisoners.

In my efforts for the prisoners it was always a matter of great importance to me that I had the whole of Baden solid behind me. I never saw a trace of pettiness or unkindness attempting to interfere with our work.

The Honorary Doctorate which the University of Freiburg awarded me, was more in my eyes than a mere form. I took it as a mark of honest approval and I still often think of the words with which the Dean, Professor Rosin, conferred this distinction upon me.

'We know how much your prudent and yet powerful work meant for the smoothing of the way which made it more and more possible to ascertain the fate of the many

[1] *Née* Princess Elizabeth of Sachsen-Altenburg, wife of my close friend the Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovitch, the distinguished Russian poet and translator of *Hamlet*.

[2] According to her harrowing description (*Unter Kriegsgefangenen in Russland und Sibirien*, 1914 *bis* 1920, Berlin, 1922, p. 62), out of 70,000 prisoners of war in the Murman area 25,000 perished, and 32,000 were seriously ill in the autumn of 1916.

missing in the Eastern theatre of war, for whom, especially after great battles, many a true heart at home beat anxiously. We know how many of our sick and wounded prisoners returned from France or Russia through your untiring efforts and found in Switzerland either health or medical examination and care. We know the success which has attended your Highness' earnest demand for the humane treatment of our prisoners, and how again and again and on all sides, especially in the neutral countries, you rallied the forces which were willing and able to intervene with the enemy Powers to secure improvement in the conditions under which our prisoners lived, more thorough medical treatment, satisfaction of their religious and spiritual needs, facilitation of their communication with their homes.'

In the course of the war the line followed by Partsch and me was fully accepted by the entire public opinion of Germany and also by the authorities.

On 17th December, 1917, I said: 'The Red Cross spirit belongs as much to the German Army as the spirit of attack. The man who refuses to pardon a disarmed enemy is as great a traitor as the man who does not put forth every ounce of strength to overthrow a fighting enemy.' I was overpowered by the agreement which I met with in every part of the country. It was strongest of all in the army.

In the summer of 1918 I sent His Majesty a detailed memorandum on prisoner problems in which I put together and repeated old proposals in a new form. In particular I revived a plan which went back to conversations which I had had with Herr von Jagow, when he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the first year of the war. I asked for the foundation of a Ministry of Prisoners with a man of international standing at its head. His task was to be a twofold one; it should comprise both defence against calumny, and above all a unified regime for prisoner camps which should keep a firm hold on all questions of organization and personnel, and should thus be in a position to prevent any deviation from the line of humanity.

The Kaiser assured me of his unqualified agreement and commanded the Foreign Office and the War Office to give effect to my proposals.

Soon after this I met General Friedrich in Constance and he thanked me feelingly; my letter to the Kaiser, he said, had helped to overcome the last remaining obstacles. He was convinced to-day that my prisoner policy had been right from the beginning. . . . It was the last time I saw General Friedrich. A few weeks later I was shocked to hear of his death.

I met 'the enemy' twice.

I had a meeting with an emissary of the King of England in Switzerland. Our negotiations were carried out on strictly businesslike lines and were limited to the discussion of individual points of complaint.

My relations with the West—in contrast to those with the East—had never any political colouring. But to my close touch with British mentality I owe my recognition of a fact which was destined to determine my whole outlook on war policy. In personal conversation with British prisoners, even with educated and chivalrous officers, I often met with a credulity in regard to our 'atrocities' and 'plans for world dominion' that really startled me; and on the other hand a readiness to change their opinion when they came in contact with spontaneous German kindness, which in its way was just as astonishing. I know of quite a number of Englishmen who after their return from Germany felt themselves in honour bound to bear witness against our slanderers. *A boldly-conceived policy in the treatment of prisoners, under a unified lead, would have succeeded in piercing the blockade which Britain had imposed on her own people against the truth about Germany.*

From the beginning of the war I had always been deeply concerned by the progressive triumph of the enemy propaganda and I was always consoled with the remark that fair play would again have free course after the war. For my part I felt most strongly that the war could not come to a

reputable end unless the disreputable war spirit had first been fought down.

If one read the newspapers, one might well despair of this object ; but signs were repeatedly reported from the front that among the fighting troops normal human feeling had not been altogether lost. We had a moving example of this at the end of 1914. At Christmas in that year the scorned gospel of Christ suddenly and unexpectedly sprang to life in the hearts of the fighting soldiers. British and German soldiers swarmed out of the trenches and gazed on the brother man whose slaughter had hitherto been their only concern. They chatted together, exchanged cigarettes and celebrated the holy eve by a truce without order or leave from their Commanders. I heard that a short time afterwards a very strict order of the day was issued on both sides to prevent the repetition of such war-disturbing occurrences.

In November 1915 I attended the Stockholm Conference on the prisoner question.

The suggestion to hold this conference came from me. On the occasion of a visit to the prisoner camp in Stralsund along with the Swedish ambassador, Count Taube, a sincere friend of the German cause, I made the acquaintance of Prince Lieven. He had been in charge of the hospital train fitted out by the Dowager Empress of Russia, and had been captured along with his train. He was a Baltic nobleman of the best type. I had been at some trouble to arrange his exchange against a German gentleman. In a few hours he was due to leave for Russia by way of Sweden. We discussed the prisoner question and it occurred to me that I should give him a letter to my aunt, the Dowager Empress, begging her to interest herself in the summoning of a conference of the Red Cross delegations of Russia, Germany and Austria. As the place of meeting I proposed Stockholm, which appeared to me to be most suitable not only because of its geographical position but because the personality of Prince Karl of Sweden, the President of the Swedish Red Cross, who was married to a niece of the German Empress, offered a

guarantee that the conduct of business would be absolutely impartial. The Swedish Red Cross had already done much for suffering Germans.

In my letter to the Dowager Empress, I said that the pharisaical attitude which all Governments and countries were taking up in the prisoner question prevented a fair judgment being formed on the suffering of these unhappy men everywhere. Nothing could be accomplished by reciprocal reproaches. The only thing to do was to look the truth in the face and devise guiding lines for a treatment of the prisoners which should be as humane as possible.

That could only be done in face to face discussion. I begged her to throw her great authority into the scale for the summoning of a conference. It was due chiefly to her initiative that the obstacles in Russia were overcome. The conference was opened on 22nd November, 1915, and it lasted till 1st December. The clash of opinion was sometimes very acute and it was unfortunately impossible to prevent a whole forenoon being devoted to the business of bandying reproaches and substantiating them by detailed instances. It was an unworthy beginning, but in spite of all my efforts the Russian delegation could not be induced to spare us this ordeal.

But the work done by the Conference[1] can be described as

[1] The final report signed at Stockholm on 1st December, 1915, could only record that the resolutions passed by the members of the Conference were to be recommended to their Governments, which meant that they required ratification by the Governments before they could take practical effect. Conventions between the Red Cross delegates were signed on 13th May, 1916.

It was decided to form central committees and local aid committees on which neutrals were also to have seats. Those committees were to ascertain the wishes of the prisoners, distribute gifts, and have the right—after obtaining permission from their military authorities—to visit the camps.

Further conventions were made with reference to the sending of news to the prisoners' homes ; lists of prisoners and killed ; search for the missing ; exchange of keepsakes ; speeding up of postal service ; parcel service ; insurance of money sent to prisoners ; gifts ; supply and forwarding of books ; treatment of doctors and medical personnel—exchange of men not needed for the service of the prisoners ; care of the wounded and sick ; camp hygiene ; necessary minimum of furnishings

good and beneficent. It is true that when the conventions came to be carried out, new complications arose, which led to reprisals on both sides and reached such a pitch of intensity that we Germans had to appeal to Prince Waldemar of Denmark, the brother of the Dowager Empress and President of the Danish Red Cross, to put an end to the atrocities. I know that the Kaiser was very indignant that matters had been allowed to come to so acute a stage by the adoption on our side of measures of which he knew nothing.

On the occasion of the Stockholm Conference the German Chancellor entrusted me with an important diplomatic commission about which I am not even now in a position to say anything.

My correspondence with Russia grew more and more lively. Its immediate object naturally was to secure help for our prisoners, but I do not deny that from the beginning I kept a sharp look out for signs of war-weariness. I was unwilling to forego the hope that Imperial Russia, under the stress of war, would hark back to the powerful tradition of Russo-German friendship. I did all I could to knit the philanthropic thread closer, so that at a given moment it might be available to carry a political message. For this reason I did nothing to discourage my correspondents if they happened to touch on the delicate question of the rights and wrongs of the war, and I made patient attempts at instruction when I met with grotesque or offensive prejudices. My correspondents proved thoroughly amenable

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for officers and men ; feeding, clothing and treatment of the prisoners ; alleviation of mental distress ; a representative committee for the prisoners in each camp.

Most important perhaps was the decision to form a mixed committee for the belligerent countries of three neutral members, three appointed by the German, the Austrian and the Hungarian Red Cross, and three by the Russian Red Cross. These committees were to have the right to travel through the camps of all the countries concerned and make inquiries, demand information from the authorities, and speak to the prisoners without witnesses. Unfortunately the Russians placed obstacles in the way of the formation of this mixed commission, which would have prevented the rise of atrocity legends and would in many cases have removed real abuses. Only a journey by neutrals was actually carried out.

to enlightenment. Their desire to help the German prisoners grew stronger and stronger. They worked, it is true, under the constant pressure of a nervous fear of public opinion which can hardly be realized in Germany.[1] Thus, one of my relatives wrote me :

' How glad, oh how glad I would have been to see the German sisters, but I am not allowed to. It makes me perfectly miserable to think that I could appear in the old country to be a coward. You don't know how hard it all is.'

Naturally those ladies at the Russian Court who were of German extraction had to be extremely careful.

At the end of October 1915 two of my relatives told me how little they could help. It was out of the question, they wrote, that they themselves should make inquiries about prisoners ; only through official acquaintances—another time it was ' through neutrals '—could they draw attention to abuses. The Grand Duchess Konstantine complained of the horrors attending the deportation of the Baltic pastors : ' My husband will not have me mixing myself up in such matters ' ; and then in the same letter : ' To drag in Alix (the Empress) at all would be a downright crime.' The Dowager Empress was in a much stronger position to

[1] Letter of the Tsarina to the Tsar, of 5th January, 1916 : ' I read an endless letter from Max to Vicky ; he wished me to read it. He tries to be fair, but it was more than painful, for much of what he says about here and the prisoners is alas ! true. I can only repeat that I think a higher official should be sent with Madame Orjevsky to inspect our prisons, especially in Siberia. It is so far away and unfortunately the people in our country seldom do their duty, especially when they are out of sight. The letter gripped me, there was much truth in it and also untrue things, and he says that our people will not believe accusations against the treatment here (and *vice versa*). I saw what the sisters had told him and about the Kossacks too. But all this is too painful, only I think that he is right when he says that they have not food enough to feed their prisoners. Apart from humanity, our treatment of prisoners *must* not be ill spoken of and strict orders should be given and those who do not carry them out must be punished. But I have no right as a German to interfere in these things ; some coarse and stupid people doubtless call me a German to prevent my interference. Our cold is too intense ; their lives can be saved with more food ; 1000 have died. Our climate is so dreadfully devastating. I hope that Georgi and Tatitchef will inspect everything on their journey, especially the little towns, and poke their noses into everything, for one cannot notice everything at the first glance.' (*Die letzte Zarin*, by Joachim Kuehn, Berlin, p. 144.)

help enemy prisoners, because her standing with the Russian people was more secure.

In the middle of May 1916 (at the time of the Murman Railway horrors) it sounds as if the courage of despair has come over one of the German-born Grand Duchesses : ' I will spare myself no longer if it is a question of men's lives ' she says in one of her letters.

Not long afterwards I received a brief note which made me start.

' In the higher and less prejudiced circles of society ideas are growing clearer. People home from the front are more reasonable. I fear to say too much. We understand each other.'

Here I saw a hint to be passed on. About this time I had occasion to see Bethmann Hollweg, the Chancellor, and I showed him my relative's letter. He took the matter seriously. We discussed further steps.

Thus it was that my work for the prisoners opened out into foreign politics.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL FEELERS

UNTIL the year 1915 the attitude in educated circles was simply one of expectant confidence, a confidence that seemed inexhaustible. When one looks back, it amazes one to recall how men of proven keenness of judgment and independence of character suppressed every stirring of independent opinion on questions affecting the war both in themselves and in their environment.

> 'If we want the peace which we need, we must now above all things put our trust in the German arms and the German people in the field; but trust also in the desire for peace and the will to peace of the German Kaiser. Twice in recent years the Kaiser has assured us peace by decisive personal intervention. With no thought of our differences on the policy pursued by the Kaiser, our declaration to-day must be: At the present moment we can trust the Kaiser.[1]

These words were spoken not by a pillar of the throne but by the Social Democrat Wolfgang Heine at a great public meeting on 22nd February, 1915; and the Stuttgart *Beobachter* praised him, because 'he puts his trust in the Kaiser and the Chancellor and renounces all independent party action for the present.'

In 1916, one grew conscious of an undercurrent of criticism. It reached me by many and various ways. Herr von Tirpitz wrote me a letter full of anxiety about anglophile considerations which were blunting our sharpest weapon, the submarine war, and for the sake of which the chance of a separate peace with Russia was being neglected. Most significant, however, was the uneasy question which was being whispered

[1] *Berliner Tageblatt*, 23rd February, 1915.

in military circles: Was the decision to attack Verdun[1] right? The attack has failed; is it right to continue it? I thought it my duty to inform the chief men in the Foreign Office of these currents. These gentlemen were kind enough to furnish me with a detailed reply.

Herr von Jagow, the Secretary of State, wrote me on 5th July, 1916:

'I offer your Highness my respectful thanks for your gracious letter of the 1st. I had inquiries made at once, and it would appear that René Wibaux of Roubaix was condemned by the Military Court at Mons to 13 months' imprisonment. The report that he was condemned to death appears therefore to be mistaken. The air attack on Karlsruhe must have been terrible this time. The encroachment of the destruction of war on the civil population has reached such a pitch in this war, that one really wonders in what our boasted 'human progress' consists. Is it only in the invention of devilish technical devices? The French communiqué is a piece of downright cynicism; but, *vice versa*, I have no doubt that many a German jingo would have been capable of a similar document; and here we touch once more on the calamitous and double-edged chapter of reprisals. We live in anxious times. God grant that we may still stand fast to the storm which is raging against us in East and West. The Austrian set-back has unchained it and destroyed all our fair prospects, for the French morale was tending to collapse and now it is again quite high. But for the successful Russian offensive and the British offensive for which it provided the occasion, the secret session of the Chamber in Paris would certainly not have let Briand off so lightly. And now we must go through another blood bath. The preponderance of strength is immense. The reports from the front, thank Heaven, do not sound threatening, but I always fear that this general offensive may prove a long affair. The enemy preparations appear to be on a massive scale; they obviously wish to wear us out. One must be cautious with opinions and prophecies; but it does appear to me that the present moment means the climax of the struggle and that an ebb will set in after this, and bring us to some sort of solution. A greater effort than this can at least hardly be imagined. Your High-

[1] The attack began on 21st February, 1916.

ness will not think that my ideal is a *Pax Britannica* ;[1] ' *timeo Danaos et pacem ferentes* ' ; but we must accept some sort of peace in the end and I should be glad to accept it wherever it came from if it is in any sense a favourable peace. But the Russians simply will not have peace yet. And I cannot see how that is to be altered. There is no guiding will ; the forces in control paralyze each other ; and the *moujik* must go on shedding his blood.

' I am again giving much thought to the problem of a supreme authority for dealing with prisoners, but I fear it will remain a problem.

' This rain must be good for the front, since it hampers the enemy airmen. But it is bad for our harvest.'

Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary of State, sent me his reply on the 2nd of August :

' The Government is fully conscious of the fact that England is our most dangerous enemy. The contrary opinion, held especially in naval circles, obviously rests on the notorious fact that the Chancellor, from the date of his entry on office till the outbreak of the war, had been at pains to bring about an understanding with England. This policy brought him into the sharpest opposition to the Imperial Navy and made the Navy thoroughly distrust him. In the policy in question, however, the Chancellor was moved not by any special inclination towards or friendship for England, but by serious considerations. His policy has unfortunately not led to the desired end, and so to the avoidance of this horrible war. The Chancellor has now no sort of illusions on the subject of England. On the contrary he shares my conviction that England is our bitterest adversary, that England is holding the rest of our enemies together and exploiting them ruthlessly against us, and that we must therefore fight this *mortal enemy* with all the weapons at our command. No wish to spare England, but only the conviction that it would

[1] In a private letter of 1926 Herr von Jagow interprets the expression *Pax Britannica* as follows : ' By *Pax Britannica* I naturally never meant " a peace dictated by England " but only a peace *with* England by way of a general understanding (which large numbers of people rejected with horror on principle). We (I mean the civil Government) as a matter of fact never—either then or earlier—planned or attempted any sort of approach to England, simply because we were convinced that the ground in London was not ripe for such an approach. That every possible attempt was made to bring about a separate peace with Russia, and that they all came to grief, was, if I mistake not, known to his Highness at the time.'

bring new enemies in the field against us, has prevented him from consenting to the intensified submarine war.'

A fortnight later he sent the following supplementary statement :

'It goes without saying that the Government is making continuous efforts to bring the war to a victorious conclusion as speedily as possible. But it can only reach this much-desired goal if it succeeds in bringing about a separate peace with Russia. Unfortunately, the efforts made in this direction have not been specially furthered on the military side. In my opinion the Army Command has laid too much stress on Verdun and has neglected the East for the sake of Verdun. It is to be hoped that this sin of omission is now being made good.'

The Battle of the Somme, if its successes were compared with its sacrifices and efforts, had really been lost by the Allies in August. Public disappointment would have taken excited forms had not the Brussilof offensive simultaneously brought about the collapse of the northern Austro-Hungarian front. And so the British 'break-through' had its name changed to 'diversion' and was continued. Then Rumania entered the war [1] Her entry was greeted by the Entente with extravagant hopes of victory. It was parried on our side by the appointment of Hindenburg as Chief of the General Staff.

'The dramatic replacement of General von Falkenhayn by Marshal von Hindenburg as Chief of the German General Staff has perhaps made as great a sensation in our own country as in Germany.[2]

'So Rumania's entry into the war and Hindenburg's assumption of the Chief Command make last week the most important week in a political and military sense since the battle of the Marne.'[3]

So ran the comments in the British press.

[1] Germany's declaration of war on Rumania took place on 28th August, 1916.

[2] *Times*, 31st August, 1916.

[3] *Manchester Guardian*, 31st August, 1916.

After our rapid and victorious campaign in Rumania, the natural reaction took place in the temper of the allied peoples. The campaign of 1916 ended in bitter disillusionment all round. We and our enemies had shed our best blood in streams and neither we nor they had come one step nearer to victory. The word 'deadlock' was on every lip. In Germany, too, the impossibility of a purely military decision was realized by many in whose presence the words 'peace of understanding' could not hitherto have been uttered. People looked to the leading statesmen with a certain insistent expectancy: 'The forces on either side have obviously reached a condition of rigid equilibrium; the war must become senseless; what are you going to do to end it?'

People—and they were not isolated individuals—came to me in the autumn of 1916 full of a vague anxiety: 'Things are not going well with the war.' At the same time I became acquainted with a well-informed and reasoned line of criticism which attacked the essence of our war policy and claimed to prove with weighty arguments that we should lose the war if it went on in this fashion.

The Grand Duchess Luise introduced me to Jacob Noeggerath, who had been recommended to her by Herr von Jagow. Noeggerath was an American of German descent, the grandson of a well-known mining engineer and the son of a famous doctor. When the war broke out, he was engaged in engineering in Germany. He was convinced from the beginning that the interests of Germany and of Europe demanded the timely ending of the war, and an ending brought about by agreement between the protagonists. He regarded it as the sacred mission of the United States to throw her enormous weight into the scale of peace, not of war. Zimmermann made his acquaintance and set a special value on his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon mentality. He often appealed to Noeggerath's advice in American questions. Noeggerath stood in no sort of relation to the German Ambassador in America, but without being conscious of the fact in individual instances, he supported the desperate battle which Count Bernstorff had been fighting for years

against the declaration of the intensified submarine war. Over and over again and with ever fresh arguments he strengthened the Under-Secretary of State in his resistance to the demands of the Navy.

The starting point of our relations was my work for the prisoners. Noeggerath assigned to the doctrine of *caritas inter arma* a *political* importance which was not at first to my taste. He declared that the fight for our good name was as important as the battles fought by our armies. Our enemies must be prevented at any price from supplying their ' atrocity market ' from the German prisoner camps. They needed the ' German atrocities ' not only for propaganda abroad, but above all to strengthen the morale of their own peoples.

Noeggerath alarmed me with his thesis, that if we could not sap the enemy's war spirit, Germany would lose the war, for the Allies had inexhaustible resources in men and material and if their morale did not give way they could hold out longer than we.

But the political campaign against the enemy morale had simply not begun. Noeggerath begged for my help and hinted that I might perhaps intervene with the Kaiser. Russia's war will could only be broken by the sword. France could not be decisively beaten in the field and would suffer and fight as long as Britain was willing to stay in the war. But Germany could cripple the British war will. In Britain there was already a strong latent opposition to the war of annihilation. We ought to call it into the light of day. Noeggerath's first demand was that we should enter the lists on the subject of war guilt, in other words, that we should keep on hammering certain facts about the origin of the war into the mind of the world, facts which must end by demolishing the dogma of a German attack. Secondly we must enter the lists on the subject of atrocities. Not only must we present no points of attack to the Entente propaganda, but we must pass to the attack against our enemies' pose of infallibility. We had overwhelming material to prove Allied atrocities, material which we were holding back from a

false feeling of delicacy. Official articles in the newspapers were useless for this purpose ; the enemy populations could not be compelled to subscribe to the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

In the matter of atrocities as in the matter of war guilt the attention of the world must be attracted by means of great speeches by the Chancellor. But these speeches would only be subsidiary actions. Britain's will to fight a war to a finish would last only so long as Herr von Bethmann did not make it clear to the British people that a peace consonant with Britain's honour and security could be attained by negotiation. For Noeggerath the value of such a political campaign depended on the one supreme condition that America must not be in the war. Otherwise victory would appear to the Allied peoples to be a necessity of nature and their war will would be hardened against all temptation of a peace of understanding. He expressed his concern at the frivolous depreciation of America which lay at the root of the growing propaganda for an intensified submarine war.

Once in the war, America would make it a point of honour to wage the biggest, fiercest, longest and costliest war of all. The resources of the United States would then be at the disposal of the Allies in quite a different sense from now. Further, the technical genius of the Americans would put forth its maximum effort to parry the peril of the submarine war.

I was much impressed by the calm certainty with which Noeggerath put forward his views, and by the consistency of the ideas which he laid before me. But I could not altogether avoid a suspicion that a certain ' western ' prepossession kept his eyes riveted too firmly on England and America, and that he might be leaving out of account ways of deliverance which might suddenly open up in the East.

Noeggerath's views did not rest on chance impressions. He was in continuous touch with a group of men who shared his opinion that the art of the statesman must shape the conduct and the issue of the war. Some of these men were

working in the Central Office for Foreign News Service.[1] There Paul Rohrbach, working in close touch with the Foreign Office, had instituted press readerships for dealing with the enemy and the neutral press. The readers were experts on the countries in whose press they specialized, and they supplied weekly reports and a continuous flow of suggestions. The information so acquired was supplemented by inquiries in neutral countries. All dealings with secret agents were rejected on principle.

I was in any case sufficiently disquieted to ask for proof. In the course of the next few months the ' diagnostic laboratory ' of the Central Office supplied me liberally with memoranda, draft proposals, and weekly reports. I gained an exact insight into the method of ' interpretation ' which the Office had elaborated to a fine art. The ground problem of the politics and strategy of the war, as it had been defined by Rohrbach's group in the collaboration of years, stood out in ever clearer outline before my eyes.

THE ROOT PROBLEM OF STRATEGY AND POLITICS AS VIEWED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE FOR FOREIGN NEWS SERVICE

The chief interest attached to the British and the Russian sections. The French press was of secondary importance in view of a monotony which is easily explained by France's position as ' occupied territory ' and by the ' grande passion ' of the French nation.

In the Russian section the provincial press was scrutinized with special care. The censorship did not penetrate to every

[1] The Central Office for Foreign News Service was a characteristic creation of the war period. It was officially attached to the Foreign Office and was at first under the orders of von Mumm, the Ambassador, and afterwards of von Radowitz, Geheimrat Councillor of Legation. The routine business was under the charge first of Thiel and afterwards Kiliani, both Consuls-General. The ' Press Section ' founded by Paul Rohrbach enjoyed a wide measure of independence ; most of the readers had no official position. Among others who worked there were Karl Brinkmann, the economist, and Otto Grautoff, the art historian. In what follows ' Central Office ' means ' Press Section of the Central Office for Foreign News Service.'

corner of the huge Russian Empire, a result partly of its slovenly handling and partly of the Russian's impulsive temperament, which shakes off all restraint when it is overpowered by fury or by joy. Silvio Broedrich of Kurland acted—with repeated interruptions—as one of the Russian readers in the Central Office. He was the most prominent personality in the group. For ten years he has been the leading colonizer in his homeland. There his indomitable energy won him the nickname of 'Bismarck of the East.' Between 1905 and the outbreak of the war he had collected 10,000 German colonists from South Russia and other parts of the Empire and settled them on his native soil, persuading or bullying the suspicious or even hostile Russian authorities. After the occupation of Kurland by German troops he succeeded in inspiring the big landed proprietors of his country to a fine deed of sacrifice. They placed a third of their property at the disposal of German settlers. He guaranteed that if Livonia and Esthonia were conquered the example of the nobility of Kurland would be followed there too. Broedrich was ably seconded in his work on the Russian press by Rohrbach, by the well-known publicist Axel Schmid, and also at times by that admirable authority on Russia, Friedrich von Haken. Before the war Haken had been employed under Krivoshein in the Russian Ministry of Agriculture. Unfortunately he was compelled by serious illness to give up his work in Berlin as early as 1915. After the German collapse he had himself carried to his beloved Riga to die.

The English section was under the charge of Kurt Hahn, who had left England on 1st August, 1914, after a stay of several years. The British press offered unique material for diagnosis. Great newspapers like the *Times*, *Westminster Gazette* and the *Manchester Guardian* have an importance out of all comparison with our leading German papers.

'*With some notable exceptions*,'[1] wrote Rohrbach,[2] 'the

[1] My italics.

[2] In an unpublished memorandum of July 1915: 'The internal political situation in England and the possibility of Germany influencing it.'

German press, in matters of foreign policy, is a hurly-burly of opinions expressed by ill-informed editors, or it parrots information supplied in authoritative quarters.' The great British newspapers not only reflect important decisions affecting war policy, they also prepare them. The Cabinet and the War Office are often at loggerheads ; both look for backing in the press so that in the final councils they may be able to point to currents of popular support. Even individual ministers invoke the help of the press against what they consider the pernicious views of their colleagues ; and so great controversies such as ' Eastern Strategy *versus* Western Strategy,' ' Conscription *versus* Voluntary Service,' ' The Home Front *versus* the Army in the Distribution of Man Power,' are fought out in the full light of publicity, and the papers which are taken into confidence cannot resist the temptation to issue bulletins recording the progress of the cause they favour in the Cabinet. The newspapers forget again and again that the enemy is listening. Now and again they attempt to atone for their indiscretions by fits of convulsive reticence. But these fits are merely amusing and disclose the very thing they try to hide.

Lord Northcliffe occupied a position apart. He not only prepared and co-operated ; his was often the directing will.

And thus the Central Office was able to predict important events such as the introduction of conscription, or the dramatic and sudden formation of the coalition ministry ; as early as 14th July, 1915, it had been foreseen that in the end Lloyd George would be ready to accept the national leadership from Northcliffe's hand. Four weeks before the sinking of the ' Lusitania,' the Central Office pointed out the consequences which the torpedoing of passenger steamships would have in the strengthening of British war morale.

Useful information on the development of the British war plans was extracted from the press and placed at the disposal of the Army Command.

At least once a week the press readers met and exchanged information. They did not always agree with each other

on the question of war aims. There were aberrations and waverings ; the words Zeebruegge and Liège had at times an alluring sound even in this group. But long and intensive collaboration had produced an agreement on the root problem of war politics and strategy which, so far as every single member of this group was concerned, was an article of faith.

I. We must place either France or Russia or Britain *hors de combat*. So long as the Entente, as represented by its three leading members, stands on its feet in a military sense, so long will the feeling prevail that its resources in men and material make victory, soon or late, a certainty. But as soon as one of the Entente powers were knocked out, its allies' faith in victory would be a thing of the past.

II. Can Britain be beaten by the submarine war ? Certainly not, if America is in the war.

III. The two Powers which could be placed *hors de combat* by an immediate decision on land, are France and Russia. Attempts to smash France were reasonable so long as the British war will and the British war machine were in the early stages of their development. The great chance was lost in the battle of the Marne.

IV. If our hammer blows in the West fail to bring about a decisive defeat of the Allied armies, they only hammer Anglo-French cohesion closer than before.

V. Russia can be beaten. The dogma of her invincibility is false and rests on misunderstood historical parallels. Rohrbach and his friends have been preaching the following sermon ever since the beginning of the war : [1]

' It will be like the felling of a tree. Up to a certain point the saw seems to produce no effect ; the tree still stands. But when the sawyer comes to the critical point, the tree begins to crack and little more work is needed when down it goes. So it will be with Russia *if our saw continues long enough at work*.[2] . . . The most important thing is perhaps the psychological factor of suggestion. . . . To-

[1] From an unpublished memorandum by von Haken, " On Russia " (October 1915).

[2] My italics.

day everybody is certain that the revolution is coming. . . . We need not expect a violent upheaval. The passing of power into the hands of the parties of the Left, and the failure of the central Government to resist the local authorities are bound, as soon as officials and officers give up the cause of the Government as lost, to have the same effect from our point of view as an actual revolution. The whole country . . . would lie defenceless at our feet. . . . The Russians are a people who will lose all power of resistance *as soon as the collapse begins*.' [1]

The power of these subversive tendencies has been strengthened by the now pressing problem of the nationalities. Since the foundation of the Polish state, the Finns, Ukrainians, Balts and Lithuanians feel the morning air in their nostrils ; what then if we enter on a new victorious campaign in the East as liberators of the small nations ? The nationalities will shatter the Russian Empire as soon as the defeat of its armies is sealed. And then the ' Russian Orange ' will split into its component ethnical units.

This thesis of Rohrbach's, far from being confuted by subsequent events, has been amply confirmed. But—the charge is made by Rohrbach himself in a memorandum entitled *A Layman's Remarks on the War of Two Fronts* [2]—in the later part of 1914 Hindenburg had not sufficient troops at his disposal for his advance into Poland.[3] He lacked the 180,000 men which our simultaneous attacks in Flanders appear to have cost us. In August 1915 he was within an ace of involving the main Russian army in catastrophe [4] ;

[1] My italics.

[2] Dated 30th August, 1916.

[3] This opinion is confirmed by the following verdict of Moltke, contained in a letter written to a general on 12th January, 1915 : ' In November great things could have been done in the East. Field-Marshal Hindenburg's requests and remonstrances were not listened to.' Cf. Lt.-Col. Helmuth v. Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente*, 1877-1916, Stuttgart, 1922, p. 408.

[4] In his criticism of the conduct of the 1915 operations Rohrbach does not go to the root of the matter. In view of the general strategical situation, stronger forces could not be assembled at Vilna in August 1915. The decisive point is that the converging movement by way of Vilna coincided with the end of the offensive, not with its beginning, as Hindenburg had vainly urged at the discussion in Posen on 2nd July, 1915. In

if his forces had been sufficient to stop the hole at Vilna, the internal collapse of Russia would have been highly probable.[1] The Russian army recovered, while we were once more seeking the decision in France. But this recovery only means that ' our saw had not been long enough at work.' [2] British military criticism found it incomprehensible that the German General Staff, in the grip of Western obsessions, had made the Russians a present of this breathing space, which made them capable of their great offensive against Austria, and which they themselves regarded as an uncovenanted gift of fortune.

The capture of St. Petersburg would have been an easy task in comparison with our efforts before Verdun. It would have struck at the heart of the Russian war industry and knocked our Eastern enemies out of the fight.

Can the wasted opportunity be recovered ? Only our Army Command can answer this question, but whether or not after this bloody year our offensive power is equal to

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the early summer there could hardly have been a possibility of escape for the main Russian forces ; they were not yet clear of the Vistula bend and would in all human probability have been cut off.

[1] Cf. the *Daily News* of 25th September, 1915. ' If Hindenburg had captured the [Russian] army at Vilna, an internal catastrophe might have overtaken Russia.'

[2] Cf. Paléologue's notes of 3rd September, 1915 (*Am Zarenhof waehrend des Weltkrieges*, Munich, 1926, Vol. I., p. 407 f.). ' When I recall all the disquieting symptoms which I have noticed in these last few weeks, it appears to me obvious that an outbreak was pending among the Russian people. At what time, in what form, under what circumstances will this outbreak occur ? Will its occasion and determining cause be a military catastrophe, a famine, a bloody revolt, a barrack mutiny, a drama in the Palace ? I cannot tell. But the event seems to me to be knocking at the door now like an inexorable and historic decree of fate. Anyhow, the probabilities are already so strong that I regard it as my duty to inform the French Government ; I am therefore sending Delcassé a telegram describing the dangers of the military situation and closing with the words, "As for the internal situation, it is to say the least disquieting. Until recently it was possible to believe that there would be no revolutionary unrest before the end of the war. I could no longer guarantee this. The question now is whether Russia within a shorter or longer period will be in a position to act effectively the part of ally. However uncertain this eventuality may be, it must henceforth be taken account of by the Government of the Republic in its plans for the future and by General Joffre in his calculations." '

another great blow, one thing is certain : we cannot afford to go on leaving our military effort without political support. France, or Britain, or Russia ;—the home front of one of these countries must be decisively pierced.

How is that to be done ? If the people of Russia or of Britain or of France sees that a peace is attainable by way of negotiation—not indeed the peace that it wishes, but one differing by so fine a margin from it that the difference seems no longer to be worth the suffering and the lives of men—then a crisis will break out in that country which will make it either ready for peace or at least incapable of its highest military effort.

Can we bring about such a peace crisis in Russia ? Russia, Rohrbach replied, will never consent to a separate peace until her war machine is smashed.

It is true that a current is gaining force at the Court of the Tsar which at bottom hates the treaty with the Western democracies and sees the only salvation for autocracy in an early conclusion of the war. But to-day the Court lives in fear of newly awakened forces which distrust and control it. The Liberal Party has formed a league with the army and with leading members of the Imperial Family for fighting through to victory. Constantinople and the liberation of the Slav brothers are now their war aims and the great power which binds them together. The ' lords of the battle cry ' are the Constitutional Democrats behind whom stand the banks and industry and the thin stratum of the Intelligentsia. They cling to this war with a special fervour, for they see in a victory by the side of France and Britain the promise of the final emergence of their country from mediaeval darkness.

After the continuous defeats of the Russian army in the summer of 1915, the Duma block made a bid for power ; it demanded the convocation of a Parliamentary Government. The Tsar's answer was the prorogation of the Duma and the dismissal of the Commander-in-Chief, Nikolai Nikolaivitch, whom he believed to be in league with the members of the Duma.

But the Liberal Imperialists do not despair of their cause.

They have taken the entire war industry into their own hands and are undertaking to organize it on the pattern of Western Europe. They have seats on all the leading war committees. Public opinion is with them and sounds the alarm every few months against any tendency towards the treason of a separate peace which may arise in reactionary circles.

What have we to offer this new Russia ? Nothing—unless we are ready to sacrifice Turkey and Austria.

No more can we get at the French home front until France begins to despair of victory or we declare publicly that we are ready to talk about Alsace-Lorraine. What German statesman would desire or dare to do this ? The ' continental ' politicians who hope to set France at enmity with Britain and by grace of this enmity induce her to renounce Alsace-Lorraine, have no notion of the moral realities that stand behind France's national uprising. They are building castles in the air.

The British war will, and it alone, can be weakened. It is true that Britain is our toughest and most powerful foe and holds the whole Alliance together ; but—such is our belief—only for so long as no honourable peace seems to the British people to be attainable.

The British press shows the attentive observer, as with flares, the vulnerable spots in the British home front. Ever since November 1914, German statesmanship has been begged with an insistence increasing month by month, and finally implored, to launch a political offensive against Britain. The development of the British war spirit is worked out, week by week, in the tidiest detail, by the Central Office.

The war enthusiasm which accompanied the first mobilization lived on our invasion of Belgium.

1. If the violation of Belgian neutrality had been avoided there would have been a split in the British Cabinet at the beginning of August 1914. A Coalition Ministry under Conservative leadership would have been immediately formed and would have declared war. But such a war would

not have been supported by a united national movement either in the Empire or in Britain itself.[1]

2. On 8th March, 1915, the *Times* prints its famous article: 'Why we are at War.' In this article it boldly avows its adherence to the historic British aim of the 'Balance of Power' and warns its readers against the illusion that Britain is fighting chiefly for Belgium. The *Times* is clear on one point: if stress comes to be laid on the Belgian question, the German Government is presented with a weapon with which it can knock the wind out of the British war effort. It can declare: We do not wish to annex Belgium.

3. In opposition to the *Times* party Sir Edward Grey and Sir John Simon on 22nd and 23rd March, 1915, put Belgium in the forefront as the occasion of the war and as war aim.

> 'If we consider the origin of the war, we find the explanation of our national unity, the inspiration of our united national front, the key to our national war aim, if we keep the Belgian aspect before our eyes.'

It is noteworthy that neither Grey nor Simon says a word about Alsace-Lorraine. The only war aim expressly mentioned is Belgian integrity and the indemnification of Belgium.[2]

A reconnaissance at the Hague in April 1915 confirmed this appreciation of the situation. At an International Conference of Pacifists German and British pacifists come into close touch. The English press reader from the Central Office accompanies the German party as interpreter. Lowes Dickinson, one of the finest English writers on history and

[1] Recent publications of documents in the British archives disclose the great anxiety felt in Paris and London on the question how English pacificism was to be overcome.

[2] Cf. Col. House's letter to Wilson of 15th February, 1915, from London: 'As a matter of fact, there is no feeling whatever, excepting among a very small circle, for anything out of the war, excepting a permanent settlement, evacuation, and indemnity to Belgium; but no one believes that Germany is ready for such terms.' (*The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, London, 1926, Vol. I., p. 380).

politics[1] professes a knowledge of Sir Edward Grey's views. The important passage of the German report on these discussions runs as follows :

' The Belgian problem would still appear to bulk most largely in the British view, and two-thirds of the British people would be tired of the war as soon as it became known that Germany did not wish to retain Belgium permanently. According to this testimony, then, the cleavage in the British people which would have opened if the violation of Belgian neutrality had been avoided at the beginning of the war can still be brought about. The result, in the opinion of our informants, would be a speedy peace ; but, if our informants, as we think possible, should be mistaken in this view, the continuation of the war would at least involve the British war party in the greatest difficulties.'

At the same time a high Dutch official claims to know of a communication coming directly from the British Foreign Office that a declaration on Belgium would open the way to peace negotiations.

For the success of the second mobilization, in the summer of 1915, the British Government had to thank the war passion let loose by the sinking of the ' Lusitania.'

Englishmen of all classes have a boyish craving for a bit of real enjoyment to relieve their daily toil. Ten months had passed, and Asquith had not yet succeeded in overcoming his people's unwarlike habits. True, Zeppelin attacks, and Blue Books on German atrocities in Belgium and on barbarous treatment of prisoners were calculated to fire Britain for the cause of the war. But it was always a light that flickered and failed. Frenchmen who visited England were annoyed to see the country going about its daily business so unruffled and cheerful. As late as the beginning of May 1915 the *Times* still complained that ' no one would believe that this country is at war.'

Then the ' Lusitania ' was torpedoed.

This is not the place to consider the moral aspect of the

[1] Author of *The Greek View of Life*, *The Meaning of Good*, *The European Anarchy*, *War: its Nature, Causes and Cure*

sinking of the ' Lusitania.' I believe that the verdict of history will be expressed in the words with which the *Manchester Guardian* once put Winston Churchill in his place when he called the brave German sailors ' Baby Killers ' after their attack on the English coast: ' We would point out to Mr. Churchill that babies can be killed by hunger as well as by shells.' The sinking of the ' Lusitania ' was from the legal standpoint [1]—leaving the moral question for the moment aside—a reprisal against the hunger war that Britain had declared on the German non-combatant population. I need only recall the daily heading ' Our Hungry Enemies ' under which the *Westminster Gazette* used to depict with smug malice how it was just the ailing and the poor who had to suffer under the blockade in Germany. The psychology of later generations will understand how Germany noted the fact—not, indeed, with exultation, but with restricted sympathy and even, we cannot deny it, here and there with a certain satisfaction—that the misery of war had at last made its way into England's green and pleasant land, which had consented to this war in full confidence in its own inviolability. But even such a wish to get one's own back is a piece of sentimentality which we have outgrown. One thing is certain and that is that Britain's inviolate state and confidence in her inviolability was a great ally of ours and the worst enemy of the British war spirit. Until the ' Lusitania ' affair the healthy instinct of the British nation could not bring itself to believe in the magnitude of the German peril to the British Empire, to become a nation in arms, and thus renounce its insular birthright. The arguments of the *Westminster Gazette* and of the propaganda committee of Rosebery, Balfour and Asquith would never have succeeded, would never have brought home to the whole population of Britain why it was so necessary to fight on the continent. The average unimaginative Englishman could not experience as a reality what he knew only from hearsay. Now every

[1] According to the statement of Dudley Field Malone, Collector at the Port of New York, the ' Lusitania ' was carrying 4200 chests of Springfield cartridges, containing a total of eleven tons of black powder. Cf. Tirpitz, *Deutsche Ohnmachtspolitik im Weltkrieg*, 1926, p. 334 n.

sense in Britain was alert to all the terrors of the German peril and there was no longer any doubt about Germany's hatred. ' Frightfulness,' the empty catch-word of the British yellow press acquired life and blood at one blow when those women and children were washed up on the Irish coast. We must understand this word in all its ugliness if we wish to understand Britain's war spirit as it exists now. As soon as German war methods involve the death of non-combatants the word ' frightfulness ' prevents our neutral and belligerent enemies from drawing the fair conclusion that Germany cannot always spare civilians in the attainment of a stern military end. No, the word ' frightfulness ' at once releases the feeling that it is just the non-combatants that Germany has in view. Their misery and their death is to break the spirit of the enemy peoples ! So low is Germany's estimate of her enemies' moral power of resistance !

Northcliffe feared that the flood of patriotic passion would ebb again and decided at once to anchor the ' Lusitania ' temper. And so he founded his Coalition Ministry.[1]

Lloyd George is appointed Minister of Munitions (19th May, 1915). Northcliffe at once greets him as his agent for the introduction of conscription, hails him as the national leader and offers him Asquith's succession. The Munitions Act is the first coinage of the newly created spirit of sacrifice. The consent of the trade unions to the surrender of important privileges of the skilled workman and the feat of inducing them to accept joint responsibility for the output of munitions was the great step that made the war in Britain a people's war. Lloyd George did not put the case too

[1] The method is interesting. On 10th May, 1915, the *Times* publishes a leading article, ' The Outcasts of Civilization.' Lord Rosebery wrote an open letter to the *Times* : ' Never has the saying " worse than a crime, a blunder," been more clearly illustrated than by the sinking of the ' Lusitania.' Germany wants to terrorize us. She will only succeed in summoning all our national forces to a fresh effort on a colossal scale.' On 11th May the *Times* demands a more intense measure of national organization. On 12th May, publication of the Atrocities Report of Bryce's Committee. On 13th May the *Times* is able to report anti-German demonstrations and lootings. On 14th May the *Times*

strongly when he said in June 1915 : ' Now at last the war machine has got going.' Smillie, the miners' leader, added his weighty endorsement on 29th June, when he said : ' A strike at this time is unthinkable.' From now on the war in Britain was an unreasoning war of revenge.

If the British people is shown victory, victory it will have at any price, and the idea of a peace of compromise will be rejected with indignation and with all the toughness of the British character. True, there are still serious hitches in the British war machine ; but it goes ; and if it stops the fire can be stoked with Cavell and Fryatt incidents and wave after wave of patriotic fury released ; and back comes the old ' Lusitania ' temper with its refrain : ' They want to terrorize us ! Are we downhearted ? ' [1] From now on the British war spirit can only be shaken if the military situation is so depressing that even the greatest efforts Britain can make no longer seem to guarantee victory. Now Britain's confidence in victory is based on four things :

1. Hope in an economic collapse in Germany.
2. Hope in the Russian steam roller.
3. The universal feeling of superiority in men and raw material.
4. The conviction that since the ' Lusitania ' affair America has been in the uncomfortable position of having swallowed a declaration of war which must sooner or later be brought up.

From the later part of 1915 onwards, the British war spirit shows signs of wavering and inhibition. They follow the ups and downs of the military situation, and go hand in hand

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comments on Repington's visit to the front: 'The want of an unlimited supply of high explosive was a fatal bar to our success. . . . It is certain that we can smash the German crust if we have the means.' This sentence is repeated on three successive days and adopted as the motto of the agitation which follows. Every occasion is seized to point out that Asquith had denied that the lack of shells had hampered the British offensive. (Kurt Hahn, ' Englands Kriegswille im Lichte der englischen Presse,' *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, January 1917, Vol. CLXVII, 1, 1 ff.)

[1] Or rather ' We are no cowards ' (Wir sind keine Feiglinge) [Tr.].

with searchings of conscience on the question of guilt. Between May and the autumn of 1916 the British peace movement reaches a climax.

At the end of the disillusioning campaign of 1915 there is deep depression in Britain. The universal hope that Britain can hold out longer and that Germany will be the first to collapse, loses its power to console in the face of a new winter in blood and mire, which Germany will certainly survive. America's intervention seems to have receded into the dim distance, while Russia is a ' spent force ' as Lloyd George publicly puts it. Bulgaria's entry into the war seems to confirm this judgment. In November there is a debate in the House of Lords on the question of peace.

Lord Courtney speaks for the Liberal conscience in England. A special impression is made by the noble gesture with which he declines to exploit the Cavell incident as a war advertisement. He points, indeed, to the fine opportunity for showing mercy that Germany had missed, and then goes on : ' Miss Cavell's last words were " Patriotism is not enough ; one must conquer hate as well ".' Then he turns to the bishops and says : ' I make those sacred words my own, and beg your Lordships to accept them in all their simplicity.'

Lord Loreburn appeals to the forgotten statesmanship of Pitt ; the *Manchester Guardian* gives the gist of his remarks as follows :

> ' In all previous wars we have fought with ships and fought with gold, and our efforts on land have been strictly subsidiary. In this war, for the first time, we are putting out our full strength in ships and our full strength in money ; but also our effort by land is as great as that of any of our Allies. It will be necessary some day for the Government to explain how we came to revolutionize our mode of conducting war, and whether in deciding upon this revolution the Government realized fully what it was doing.'

In November 1915 the British press points out more clearly than ever to German statesmanship how it can shatter the British home front.

Thus Arnold Bennett writes in the *Daily News* of 4th November, 1915 :

> 'And all our effort, economic, naval and military, will be vitiated unless we avoid the other great danger—the danger of a premature peace. *When once peace on some terms or other is generally seen to be feasible, the danger of the wrong peace and the temptation to make it will become terrific. There is already in Britain a quite sincere and a potentially powerful body of opinion that would favour the wrong peace.*'

Garvin (a Conservative) writes in the *Observer* in November 1915 that he is less afraid of German victories than of dexterous and plausible German peace proposals which have for their object ' to revive our party feuds.'

In January 1916 conscription is carried, the ground having been well prepared by Lord Derby's deliberate dismantling of voluntarism. Such opposition as still makes itself heard in Liberal and Labour circles has a touch of unreality in face of the prodigious war effort which is being demanded of and put forth by Britain. On the other hand, no fresh wave of war enthusiasm sweeps over the country when the long conscription campaign has at length attained its end.

In the course of the year two of the springs from which the British war effort derived its energy had become somewhat troubled.

First, the belief that Germany bears the sole responsibility for the war. The body of workers who banded themselves together under the leadership of E. D. Morel in the Union of Democratic Control,[1] reduced the question of war guilt to simple and illuminating formulae,[2] which they never tired of repeating in fresh and ingenious variations. The British

[1] Founded 17th November, 1914.

[2] Following the *Labour Leader* (March-June, 1915) we may summarize these formulae as follows :

1. The theory that Germany is solely responsible for the war, is in the first place not true, and secondly, it means a long war ending with the unconditional surrender of Germany and this war in its turn leads to a peace which is a potential source of future wars and damages Britain's real interest, which demands reconciliation with Germany.
2. Hatred of Germany leads British policy to forget its former caution in regard to Russia. Russia intends to annex the whole of Poland along with Danzig and to establish herself in Constantinople and she

Government was obviously growing nervous at the success of this work of enlightenment.

In the late summer of 1915 the Central Office for Foreign News Service had succeeded in inducing Bethmann Hollweg to make an important public sally which put valuable material into the hands of those who were fighting the battle of truth in Britain. The happy hunting ground of the enemy propaganda had so far been the darkness which hung over the exchange of views between Germany and Austria in the twelve critical days of July 1914. ' Why are we told nothing of the exchange of telegrams between Vienna and Berlin ? ' This question became a catchword. In the end everyone was saying that Germany had egged Austria on. The so-called ' *Westminster Gazette* Telegram ' was felt to be a difficulty. On 30th July, 1914, the German Chancellor had had the following warning wired to Vienna :

' We are ready to fulfil our duty under the treaty but we must decline to allow ourselves to be drawn by Vienna into a world conflagration [wantonly and] with no regard to our advice.' [1]

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would then control the land route to India and would be able to put an army of 10 millions into the field.

3. The arrangements made by the British Foreign Office during the last 10 years led to an unconditional alliance with Russia and France against the Central Powers. This seriously endangered the position of Germany with her one ally, Austria, and the balance of power was disturbed to her disadvantage. During the Morocco crisis Britain was officially hostile to Germany. The Entente's diplomatic preponderance was used to cheat Germany out of her rights in Morocco.
4. Germany was peace-loving as long as she felt herself safe. She began to prepare for war when she began to fear for her safety.
5. The growing Russian threat was the decisive factor for Germany. Since 1912 the war party in Russia has had its hand on the sword hilt.
6. People say that Germany planned the war in order to gain world dominion and that therefore she alone was armed and prepared. That is not true. Every country had armed. France had put a much heavier strain on her man power than Germany, and even without Russia was equal if not superior to Germany in the number of her soldiers and in the quantity and quality of her material. Lloyd George himself said in 1908 : ' If we were in Germany's position, would we not arm ? '

[1] Bethmann Hollweg to the German Ambassador in Vienna, von Tschirschky, 30th July, 1914 : cf. Kautsky, *Die deutschen Dokumente zum*

This passage had been shown by our Foreign Office to the Berlin correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* on the eve of the war as a sign of Germany's peaceful intentions. But out of consideration for Austria's feelings it had not been printed in the German White Book.

The *Westminster Gazette* (Grey's organ) had sought to discredit this inconvenient document by declaring that the telegram had been either forged or countermanded. When Bethmann Hollweg decided in his speech of 19th August, 1915, to spare Austria's susceptibility no longer and to guarantee the genuineness of the telegram, his earnestness was so impressive that scarcely anyone has since dared to doubt its authenticity or *bona fides*.

The Chancellor's repeated revelations on the facts of the general Russian mobilization made an equally forcible impression on enemies and neutrals.

Second, the belief that Britain was fighting the war with clean hands was losing strength. The moral disgust of British Liberalism was growing month by month ; Lord Northcliffe had in fact succeeded by his control of the *Times* in beating up the mob spirit into the upper classes. The yellow press [1]

Kriegsausbruch, Charlottenburg, 1919, Vol. II., No. 396. The word ' wantonly,' which stood in the original, was omitted both in the text given to the *Westminster Gazette* and in the Reichstag speech of 19th August, 1915.

[1] ' How we laughed the other day at a tale of the Germans in some dug-outs, when a number of grenades, flung by skilful hands, caught them straight in their fat stomachs and blew them all to bits ! It was a rich joke. . . . We laughed and laughed . . . The killing of Germans is to them (the British Tommies) no more than the killing of vermin. The more the merrier ! And men who have hurled grenades into the enemy's trenches and exploded mines under the enemy's redoubts, and laughed to see the mangled bodies fly up in a scatter of earth, will laugh just as much at the gambols of a kitten on a French doorstep.' And with reference to a particularly skilful sniper : ' He grinned when I asked him to tell me his biggest bag. " I picked off twelve in one afternoon. . . . If I can kill one or two a day I'm satisfied. . . . Sometimes there's good sport and sometimes there ain't . . . Oh, it has its funny side, if you look at it from the right point of view." ' (*Daily Chronicle*, 30th July, 1915, report from Philip Gibbs, the well-known author.) The Chancellor mentioned the *Daily Chronicle* in his speech of 9th December, 1915, but could not bring himself to quote those frightful words : ' I shrink from soiling my lips with such language.'

followed the increasing brutalization of the war with cheers of encouragement. The Bishop of London praised the captain of the ' King Stephen ' for sailing past a wrecked Zeppelin crew, struggling in the water and crying for help, without rescuing them.

Towards the end of the year Bethmann Hollweg yielded to the insistence of the Central Office and entered the competition in atrocity charges, which was so distasteful to his gentlemanly nature. On 9th December, 1915, he pilloried the hideous murder which the ship's company of the British warship ' Baralong ' (sailing under the American flag) had committed on the defenceless crew of a German submarine. His words made a surprising impression. How keenly Britain's sense of honour was touched is shown by the public offer which Grey made on 5th January, 1916. He was ready to submit the disputed case of the ' Baralong ' to an American tribunal, along with cases in which Britain had levelled charges against Germany's conduct of the war at sea.[1] Unfortunately we did not take up Grey's proposal.

In May 1916, the question of peace was publicly discussed in the British Parliament. At the same time reliable information reached Germany that our policy had once more an opportunity to weaken the war spirit of the British people.

The war situation is causing deep anxiety in Britain. Germany and America have just surmounted the ' Sussex ' crisis peacefully.[2] Haig wants to strike again and news trickles through that the decisive breach is again to be

[1] Sinking of the ' Arabic,' attack on the unarmed steamship ' Ruol,' and bombardment of a stranded British submarine on the Danish coast by a German torpedo boat destroyer.

[2] The passenger steamer ' Sussex ' was sunk without previous warning on 24th March, 1916 ; among the victims were a number of Americans. We almost came to a breach with the United States ; the crisis was averted by our note of 4th May, in which we agreed to revert in our submarine war to the forms of cruiser war recognized in international law. But the following reservation was made : ' If the steps taken by the United States do not lead to the desired result of securing observance by all belligerent nations of the rules of humanity, the German Government would be faced with a new situation, for which it must reserve complete freedom of decision.' (Helfferich, *Vom Kriegsausbruch bis zum uneingeschraenkten U-Bootkrieg*, Berlin, 1919, p. 338 f.)

attempted. Public opinion no longer believes that it will succeed. In the spring of 1916 there is evidence of a well-organized opposition to the British General Staff and the basic idea of its strategy that the war must be decided on the Western front.

The *Manchester Guardian*, obviously working in confidential relations with dissatisfied ministers and generals, becomes the chief representative of the 'Eastern school.' Its criticism of the Western war policy never rests. 'Student of War' focuses it once a week, and every fortnight the controversy is summarized in the *Manchester Guardian War History*. After each failure of the British General Staff the attacks are made with an emphasis and a sureness of aim rivalled in the British press only by Northcliffe. The main propositions are :

1. The Asiatic frontiers are as important for the security of the British Empire as, perhaps even more important than, the European.

2. It is primitive policy and primitive strategy to believe that because the Germans happen to be at the moment in Flanders, and so near to England, the Germans can only be beaten in Flanders.

3. A breach on the Western front is impossible unless decisive breaches are first made in the East.

4. The Germans cannot break through in the West any more than we can.

5. Victory in the East will not cost so much blood as in the West. As it is only in the East that we can win a decisive victory, so it is only in the East that we can be decisively beaten. Britain can lose the war as easily at Kieff or St. Petersburg as Germany can lose it in the Balkans, at Constantinople, or in Mesopotamia.

Hand in hand with this difference on the question of principle there runs a sharp criticism of the personal capacity of Haig and Robertson, which finds an echo even among people who personally hold the view that Britain must not fritter away her forces but must seek the decision on the Western front. Nasty remarks are made, as that 'Haig can

doubtless make a big hole but he lacks the strategical skill to find his way through it.'

After the fall of Kut el-Amara (April 1916) it would have been an easy matter for the Conservatives to overthrow Asquith and Grey and to form a new coalition ministry of Conservative leanings under Lloyd George and Carson. But at the last moment they shrank from flouting the Liberal Party. It might—the anxiety was openly expressed—withdraw its support from the war and then Britain would be incapable of her best military effort. Lord Hugh Cecil wrote a letter to the *Times* (30th May, 1916), in which he gave the following warning :

> ' I reckon that there are nearly 40 per cent. of our population steady Liberals. These steady Liberals by tradition and temperament dislike war. They dislike it, not only as we all do on account of its horrors and burdens, but because they conceive it to be dangerous to civil and political liberty. They distrust and dread much of what war makes necessary—large infringements of the liberty of the subject, extensive military service, a general subordination of domestic questions to the more fundamental ones involved in war. These things create an atmosphere which is to them like that of a room with a smoky chimney, unpleasant and almost suffocating. But thanks to the patriotic leadership of Liberal Ministers, and especially of the Prime Minister, notwithstanding these prepossessions, the main body of Liberals have almost unanimously supported and approved the present war. The service thus rendered by Mr. Asquith and his friends has been of capital importance. For if 40 per cent. of the population had been hostile to the war, it would have been scarcely possible to bring the national resources to bear on a scale fit for the occasion or to maintain the national effort for the long period that has been and will be necessary. And it is indispensable that this attitude of Liberalism should continue. *If a Government were in power which did not enjoy the confidence of Liberals, such a Government as might be formed, for example, by Mr. Lloyd George with the assistance of Sir Edward Carson and Lord Milner, there would arise a tendency among Liberals to drift away from approval of the war and more and more to adopt a pacifist position. This would be in truth a national disaster. Our enemies would be vastly encouraged ; our Allies not less depressed.*

With a nation no longer united behind the Government, no skill in administration would suffice to bring the war to that decisive conclusion which we all desire.'

Further, Asquith now enjoys the confidence of the trade unions in a much fuller measure than Lloyd George. Lloyd George is no longer the great exorcist of industrial unrest. Strikes are now by no means impossible. It is said that sedition is being preached quite openly in Scotland. The continued appeals to the patriotism of the workmen to give up their union rules are being received with growing distrust. Behind these appeals the men scent a Conservative plot to carry the compulsory war measures safely over into the time of peace and thus rig the balance in the interest of property in the coming class war. Ramsay MacDonald's popularity is no longer disputed even by his enemies. Without warning the demand for a ' peace by negotiation ' crops up in the midst of industrial disputes. Quotations from moderate speeches by the German Chancellor are broadcasted in countless fly sheets. The aim is always to convey the suggestion that an honourable peace is attainable. Contacts are sought and found outside the working classes. Serious voices are raised in the city to warn the country against an unlimited prolongation of the war.[1] A man like Lord Brassey [2] comes down openly for a peace of understanding with Germany. Especially significant is the swing round which has taken place in the attitude of the pacifist Labour leaders to Grey. He is no longer attacked for his diplomacy before the war, but is referred to as the ' European-minded ' member of the Cabinet who has an uphill fight against the die-hards.

The great debate on peace in the House of Commons takes place on the 24th of May, 1916. Its importance is hushed

[1] *E.g.* by Robert Fleming, a man of influence in the city. The *Economist* of 3rd June, 1916, adds the comment: ' Mr. Robert Fleming's declaration last week accurately represents the attitude of intelligent and right-thinking business men in all parts of the United Kingdom.'

[2] Lord Brassey was formerly a Civil Lord of the Admiralty, founder and first editor of the *Naval Annual*, Governor of Victoria—a man therefore who had to be taken seriously on questions of high policy.

up in the British press, which only publishes meagre extracts from the long speeches of the pacifists ; but the shorthand reports come into the hands of our Central Office. The statesmanlike utterance of Ramsay MacDonald overshadows the humanitarian speeches of his adherents. MacDonald addresses a double message to Germany : ' If you are willing to restore Belgian integrity and Belgian sovereignty, then let the talk of peace proceed, but if you harbour even the slightest design against Belgian integrity and independence then you touch the honour of Britain, including me and my pacifist friends. In that case we too are for a war to the end.'

' I say perfectly definitely that this country, if it retains any shred of honour at all, cannot accept a peace unless peace is forced upon it which means the sacrifice of Belgian sovereignty to any extent. If Germany imagines that there is any section of this country that is prepared to accept peace at the sacrifice of any portion—and I emphasize this—not merely of Belgian sovereignty, but of any portion of it, then the sooner German public opinion is disabused of that delusion the better . . . *But . . . if Germany states in such a way that nobody can doubt its genuineness . . . " We do not want Belgium, we do not want to interfere with Belgian sovereignty. The moment peace is declared . . . we shall evacuate Belgium. We only went through it (using the German Chancellor's own words) as a piece of military necessity —an argument which this country understands far better now than it did twenty months ago.*" '—Ramsay MacDonald leaves the sentence unfinished.

' A very important part of the battle is your ability to make it perfectly clear to your enemy what your purposes are, so that your enemy cannot misuse and misrepresent your statements for the purpose of increasing his internal strength. . . .

' You must work on the psychology of your enemy as well as upon his armed forces.'

From an absolutely trustworthy neutral source we have news of an important epilogue to this speech. At the close of the sitting Grey goes up to MacDonald and says : ' I heard you with pleasure ; . . . I only answered Ponsonby and not you. I did not answer you, because I agree with you.'

Thereupon Ramsay MacDonald calls his attention to an

interruption made while he was speaking, which questioned Germany's willingness to give up Belgium. Grey replies that he has definite information which convinces him that the Chancellor has no intention of giving up Belgium.

Our Foreign Office is immediately apprised of these proceedings. The Central Office urges that Ramsay MacDonald should be put in a position to refute Grey. This can only be done if Germany puts a public document, in other words, the declaration on Belgium, into his hands. Only it must be done with lightning speed. It is known that a powerful British offensive is about to begin. The prospects are that the business of war will absorb public attention for months ahead and during this time political action must be quite futile.

The Foreign Office did not take up this suggestion.

The trial of strength between Lloyd George and Grey is approaching.

As long as the battle of the Somme and Brussilof's attack last and so long as the hopes of victory which surged up after Rumania's entry into the war repel all thoughts of compromise, the pacifists maintain a natural reserve. But veiled hints are repeatedly thrown out of American plans for intervention and of Grey's approval of such plans. In fact, the manifestoes of Wilson are obviously steeped in the vocabulary of British Liberalism. These hints are confirmed by news received by the Central Office that Colonel House has been in close touch with the Liberal ' Committee for Foreign Affairs.' The idea of a League of Peace, with America as guaranteeing power, which was coyly mooted here and there months ago, is now sharply outlined and takes the central place in the discussion. This discussion is to all external appearance a purely academic one ; but it sometimes unexpectedly leads up to the argument that if the League of Peace becomes a reality and Germany submits to the restrictions demanded from her along with all the other Great Powers, then Britain need not longer feel her security threatened even by an unbeaten Germany. The argument is interspersed with the alluring catch-word that Germany's

entry into the League of Peace means the defeat of Prussian militarism.[1]

On 28th September Lloyd George thinks it necessary to take the field openly against Grey and Wilson. In his 'Boxer Interview' he sends a message to America in his grossest and angriest style: 'Hands off the war!' The yellow press applauds him.

But a strong underground current of disgust can be traced in many quarters, in Parliament, at public meetings and in letters to the great newspapers. In old Liberal quarters, and just those which are in close touch with the fighting soldiers, Grey is urged time and again to let Britain, America, aye, and even Germany see him 'tidying up after the civilian who is enjoying the war so thoroughly.' Grey waits until the campaign of the year is approaching its disappointing close and then makes his famous speech of 23rd October in which he clearly encourages America to throw her weight into the scale of peace and cordially welcomes the project of a League of Peace. On the question of the origin of the war he holds for the first time a more temperate language. It almost seems as if the searchings of his own conscience can be heard through his words when he addresses the following proposal to Germany:

> 'I would like nothing better than to see those statements—that the Russian mobilization was an aggressive and not defensive measure, and that any other power than Germany had trafficked in the neutrality of Belgium or planned to attack through Belgium—I would like to see those statements investigated before any independent and impartial tribunal.'

The Central Office urged that Grey had had the possibility of a *détente* in mind when he made this proposal. From the question: 'Could this war have been avoided?' it was not far to the question: 'Can it not be ended?'

It seemed to be an excellent opportunity to set up a precedent for compromise, for we should have won on one of Grey's questions and lost on the other. The Govern-

[1] Cf. Hans Delbrueck, *Der realpolitische Pazifismus*.

ment was pressed to take up the challenge in terms, in other words, to demand that an impartial tribunal should be set up to investigate both questions.

The Foreign Office wavered ; Bethmann replied to Grey on 9th November and accepted the project of a League of Peace. But he dismissed Grey's offer in the question of guilt in general terms : ' We fear no tribunal.'

With Grey's speech the struggle between the peace party and the war party has reached a climax. It is now in the power of German policy to force on the public trial of strength between the two parties. What would its result be ? The Central Office believes that Lloyd George would win ; there is still enough war passion in the country to found a ' knock-out ' ministry. But a Government of Conservative tendency led by Lloyd George—such is its opinion—would end by forcing Britain into a moral isolation which would be incompatible with her position in the world ; and above all such a Government would be unable to cope with the difficulties at home, especially if they were aggravated by a peace crisis.

' Under Lloyd George Britain will either drift to defeat or come to her senses.' Such is the forecast. This forecast depends, of course, on *one* condition, namely, that Germany must not furnish Britain with the powerful alliance of America.

Solf, the Minister for the Colonies, has come into close relations with the Central Office, and is convinced that the Office has grasped the kernel of the strategical and political root problem of the war : Strike in the East, defend ourselves in the West, and cripple the British will to attack by a political offensive. But he is deeply concerned to observe that the leading men are daily weakening in their power of resistance to the demands of the Navy. He thinks it actually possible that we could succeed at one blow in delivering Britain from her terrible embarrassments ; and so he arranges with Rohrbach for the issue of a public warning pointing out the way of escape to our statesmen with all possible clearness.

On 20th November a lecture is delivered in the Deutsche

Gesellschaft [1] to an audience consisting of politicians and diplomats. Its subject is ' Britain's war spirit in the light of the British press.' [2] The lecturer points to the road to ruin which an infatuated England might tread, but is really making a veiled appeal to the *German* Government to resist the allurements of Pride. ' There are British statesmen whose insight may even now have found a solution, but they do not yet feel that strong popular movement behind them which alone can give them the strength to speak and to act. It is being said here and there in England that " the people is not yet ripe for peace." That is an awful thing to say ; it means that you are deliberately awaiting the end of the process of attrition not only in the enemy countries but also among your own people before you show them the way out which you hold to be right.'

' But one thing is certain. English Liberalism is now withdrawing its support from the war. Not from a war necessary for England's honour and safety, but from Lloyd George's war. These Pro-Boers and humanitarians have not only sent their sons in thousands to the field,—they are also the best recruiting sergeants that England's cause has had, both in England itself and in the whole world. They went bail for the good name of England and have done us immense moral damage everywhere. Over and over again men like Gilbert Murray and Lord Bryce have reconciled the neutrals to England's policy of force and even to England's alliance with Russia by the mere fact that they have thrown their conscience into the Allied cause. Their honest vocabulary has been worth whole armies to England.'

' But now the war will be for England a different war. There will be no more talk of " having drawn the sword for Belgium's sake," or of " the liberation of the small nations," or of Lord Bryce's " from the Aegean Sea northwards to the eastern shore of the Baltic." We shall hear no more of international conferences for the settlement of disputes, no more of the " Areopagus of the Peoples." The war in England

[1] A Berlin club [Tr.].

[2] Printed in *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, January 1917, Vol. CLXVII, 1, 1 ff.

will grow ugly and cynical, a war of trade and grab. It will no longer pay the world's sense of decency even the compliment of veiling its face.'

'How England will fare in such a war I cannot tell from here; but on one point there can be no doubt—the world will hate Lloyd George's England as it hates the current caricature of Germany. "*Oderint dum metuant*" may be a good enough motto for petty states which brawl with their neighbours or for a minor great power whose growing strength has not yet attracted the attention of the world, whether because it is still too modest or because a statesman of genius has known how to allay the world's fears. But if a World Power shouts in the face of all the rest of the world "*oderint, dum metuant*," then it will sooner or later be crushed under the hatred of the world. Sir Edward Grey has said it himself in his speech of 27th January, 1916, to the die-hards who demanded the ruthless employment of sea power even against the neutrals.'

'The torch of the European conscience,' said the lecturer in conclusion, 'is burning low in England.'

'If its flame in front of Germany's arms is all the brighter, then the spiritual forces which England has rallied against us, and which are now turning away from England, will be with us.'

'Frederick the Great also began his war in an atmosphere of hatred and wrong; he had made a moral conquest of the world before it ended.'

CHAPTER III

THE DECLARATION OF THE INTENSIFIED SUBMARINE WAR

At the beginning of December 1916 Lloyd George overthrew the Asquith-Grey ministry. Rumours had already been going round London at the end of November that Grey, Balfour, Lansdowne, Runciman and MacKenna favoured a peace by negotiation.

On 6th December Bukarest fell.

On 12th December the Central Powers made their peace offer. As Helfferich says in his book,[1] he was the father of the plan. Impressed by Grey's moderate speech of 23rd October, he suggested to Bethmann that Grey should be forced to show his colour by a step on the part of Germany. By the time our offer was made Grey was no longer in office.

On 21st December, 1916, President Wilson dispatched his first peace note, in which he called on the belligerent countries to state precise war aims, so that the war might no longer be fought in the dark.

On 26th December the German Government courteously declined to state its aims. A direct exchange of ideas between the belligerents, it said, seemed to be the most appropriate method.

On 30th December the note containing the reply of the Entente to our peace offer was handed over. It was full of insults designed to stamp us afresh as bearing the sole blame for the outbreak of the war as well as for its lawless conduct. The German proposal, said the reply, was worthless, because it was devoid both of substance and of definition.

[1] *Vom Kriegsausbruch bis zum uneingeschraenkten U-Bootkrieg*, p. 356.

It seemed to be less a peace move than a war manoeuvre.

> 'At this very moment, while Germany is proclaiming peace and humanity to the world, she is deporting Belgian citizens by thousands and reducing them to slavery.'[1]

On 6th January, 1917, there was a dinner at the American Chamber of Commerce at which Gerard, the American Ambassador, who had recently returned from a personal discussion with his Government in Washington, announced to the world that relations between the United States and Germany had never been better.

On 12th January the Entente replied to President Wilson. War aims were proclaimed such as the Central Powers could only accept after a crushing defeat. Side by side with the evacuation and indemnification of all occupied territories a demand was made for the return of Alsace-Lorraine, the partition of Austria-Hungary and the expulsion of the Turks from Europe.

On 20th January I received news that the declaration of the intensified submarine war had already been decided on.

On 22nd January a new peace message from Wilson was published. From the rostrum of the American Senate the great phrase: 'A peace without victory,' was launched on the public opinion of the world. The Balance of Power must be replaced by the Society of Nations, which America was ready to join. Wilson further demanded the recognition of national self-determination, free access to the sea as far as practicable for all nations, the freedom of the seas, and the limitation of armaments.

At the end of January 1917 I was in Berlin. I had business in the War Office and in the Foreign Office in connection with prisoners of war. I wished also to speak to the Chancellor and to ascertain how far he might be able to use my services in his efforts for a separate peace with Russia.

The decision concerning the submarine war had been taken. Feeling in Berlin was full of contradictions. Misgiving and hope alternated wherever you went for information.

[1] The Belgian deportations had begun at the end of October 1916.

On the one hand the optimistic figures of the Navy were fluttering round. The month, and almost the day on which England was to be forced to her knees had been worked out with mathematical precision.

The soldiers on the contrary displayed no overweening confidence. It was deep anxiety over the military situation that had made them seize the last expedient. They believed that the plan which the Allies had decided on in Rome would be carried out in 1917. This plan involved a simultaneous general offensive on all the fronts; the possibility of a renewed offensive by Brussilof against Austria was also reckoned with. After the trying experiences of the summer of 1916 it was Germany's duty to try every means of weakening the force of the enemy onslaught. For us an offensive on land was now out of the question. The navy's submarine offensive against the enemy communications promised to hinder the supply of munitions. The Government was showing us no way to an honourable peace. We had no choice but the intensified submarine war.[1]

I found the politicians in a state of mind which can only be described as dull resignation. They did not believe in the success of the submarine war. They still regarded Helfferich's refutation of the Navy's figures [2] as conclusive; but with the provocative reply of the Entente to us and especially to Wilson all hope of peace—at least of an honourable peace—had been wrecked. Wilson had no understanding of the life interests of Germany nor would he have the power to see that they were respected. Under these circumstances we had no right to renounce the use of our sharpest weapon any longer. The Chancellor—I was informed of this from a trustworthy source—shrank at bottom from the responsibility he might one day have to bear before his own conscience and before History,—the responsibility for having brought

[1] Ludendorff (*Meine Kriegserinnerungen*, Berlin, 1919, p. 250) writes that he would have been faced with a new situation and profoundly influenced in his views if the Chancellor, on 9th January, had held out the prospect of such a collapse of one of our enemies as we afterwards saw in Russia.

[2] Cf. Helfferich, *op. cit.* p. 385 f.

about a bad peace through failure to utilize his last chance of victory to the full.

And now a fourth point of view was laid before me. Noeggerath came and appealed for my help in an effort to get the intensified submarine war postponed still further. He was overpowered by the weight of the arguments he advanced ; and held that all right-thinking people must band themselves together at five minutes to twelve to avert the disaster. I give the substance of the ideas which he submitted to me ; they rested on the common work of Rohrbach's group.

1. The optimism of the navy is baseless. Germany is intensifying the submarine war, but she is also intensifying the enemy's power of defence. The error of thinking that the British are fools or sluggards has been shown up a hundred times in this war. Germany will probably bring Britain to the last extremity, but America will enter the war, and the technical genius of America and Britain and the toughness of their common stock will find a way out of this extremity.

2. The pessimism of the army is baseless. The general offensive decided on in Rome cannot be carried out. The Russian army is suffering from lack of munitions. It is not only incapable of major offensives, even its power to defend itself is threatened. Russia's lack of munitions is being openly commented on in the British Parliament. The food crisis in Russia threatens to lead to revolutionary unrest, unless relief is given.[1] The scarcity is beginning to be felt in the army.

The regime of Protopopof not only cannot but will not find a solution for the food and munition crisis. On the contrary we are given to believe that Protopopof and his people are deliberately trying to bring about social unrest and to ' cripple ' the efficiency of the armies, so as to have a pretext for making peace. But the Tsar is threatened to-day by forces which are stronger than the reactionary party. This has been shown by the murder of Rasputin (29th

[1] See the report of the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, M. P. Price, from Tiflis (5th December, 1916).

December, 1916). It is believed that members of the Imperial family were among the plotters.[1] The deed was greeted with jubilation by the army and the Duma block.

The object of Lord Milner's journey to Russia is not only to assist the recovery of the Russian war organization. It is also part of his purpose to persuade the Tsar to include in his Government men on whom the Duma block and the Allies can rely. The tension must sooner or later lead to an explosion. Be the outcome what it may, Russia cannot this year carry out the task assigned to her by the Rome conference.[2]

3. The fatalism of the politicians is baseless. They have no need to be at the end of their wits. The scornful language of the Allied statesmen is designed to show the unwavering determination of their peoples to fight on. That is bluff. The unanimity to which Lloyd George appeals does not exist.

His programme for the third mobilization is immense. Man power, the production of munitions, agriculture, shipbuilding are all to be enormously increased. Whole classes of workmen who consented to conscription in full reliance on their own indispensability are to be called to the colours. Conscription in Ireland and coloured labour for England loom in the background.

Commercial life will undergo severe restrictions. Practically every branch of production will be placed under

[1] The Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovitch was one of the conspirators, and Prince Felix Yussupof, the husband of a niece of the Tsar, was the assassin. (Paléologue, *op. cit.*, II., p. 298.)

[2] At the end of January 1917 the disquieted Western Powers sent special missions to Russia. The first meeting of the Allied Conference took place on 1st February. The French, British and Italian delegates pressed energetically for powerful simultaneous offensives on the different fronts. Then Gurko, chief of the Russian General Staff, declared: 'That the Russian army is not in a position to undertake a big offensive until it has been strengthened by the sixty new divisions whose formation was recently decided on. Now, before these divisions are raised, trained and provided with all the necessary equipment, several months, and perhaps even a year must elapse. Till then the Russian army will be able to undertake only quite subsidiary operations, which will, however, suffice to tie down the enemy on the eastern front.' (Paléologue, *op. cit.* Vol. II. p. 348).

State supervision. Lloyd George is out to restrict profits and generally means to subject property to ruthless taxation.

Will the third mobilization succeed ? Yes—if America is in the war. No—if Germany avoids the breach with America. Noeggerath and his friends are prepared to guarantee that in that case Lloyd George's game is up. Germany is in the middle of a far-reaching political move. Bethmann can keep it going until a British peace party with which we can talk is brought on to the stage. Its programme is known. A Liberal emissary handed an exposé on war aims to Colonel House in the summer of 1916; this confidential document reached Germany, presumably not against the wish of its author. The most important points in it are :

Basis of discussion between Belligerents.

1. Successful Invasion should not of itself justify Annexation.
   (*a*) Restoration of independence of Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro. Full compensation to Belgium.
   (*b*) Return to Germany of her colonies or equivalent territories. New partition of colonial possessions in Africa. Purchase and exchange to be admitted on principle.
2. Reasonable Satisfaction of
   (*a*) demands for the application of the principle of nationality in Europe by readjustment of frontiers, autonomy or other solution.
   (*b*) Demands of the Central Powers and other European states for increased economic opportunity in economically undeveloped countries.

   To (*a*) : Renunciation of conquest should not mean mere reversion to the *status quo ante bellum* with all its anomalies. The principle of nationality should be satisfied as far as possible throughout Europe in Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, the Trentino, the South Slav districts and elsewhere. A plebiscite, even under neutral supervision, will not always be practicable. In some cases autonomy within a larger state is likely to prove more satisfactory than independence, from the point of view of the nation itself no less than of European peace.

To (*b*): Special economic opportunities might be ensured to German enterprise in Asiatic Turkey. The Armenian provinces might come under Russian suzerainty.

3. Widest possible application of the principle of the 'Open Door' in all extra-European territories. The possibility of free ports on the Adriatic and Aegean, perhaps on the Baltic and North Sea, might be considered.

4. Acceptance by both sides of effective guarantees against future wars on land or sea by the establishment of a permanent system for the pacific settlement of all international disputes. Such a system would involve limitation of armaments.

This point surpasses all the others in importance. Sir Edward Grey had expressed this idea in a letter on 26th August, 1915, and on the German side Ballin, a personal friend of the Kaiser, had described the avoidance of future wars and of competition in armaments as the supreme task of the statesman.

5. Reference to a Conference of Belligerents and Neutrals, or to permanent Commissions, of the detailed working out of the above on the basis of the principles agreed to by the belligerents.

These proposals, says the commentary, were based on the belief that the allies were striving for a peace which satisfied the just demands of all peoples and would not leave behind it grievance and bitterness such as would lead to preparation for a future war.

Procedure by way of American mediation makes it possible for Germany to place herself on the same basis as the Allies, who agree with the Americans; but Britain believes that she is 'fighting for the nurseries,' in other words, that her posterity can only be safe if Germany is weakened. The solution of this difficulty is the great ideal of the League of Peace.

These proposals were accompanied by 'Arguments for Americans,' intended to show:

(*a*) that the silence of the British Liberal Committee for Foreign Affairs is not to be taken as meaning agreement with the policy of the Government;

(*b*) that the Liberal press in Britain was maintaining a certain reserve in order to maintain the right spirit in the army and navy;

(*c*) that a swing round in public opinion was conceivable and hence the peace party might possibly come into power;

(*d*) but that without such a swing round the leading men in Britain, owing to their dependence on public opinion, were not in a position to do anything for peace.

Noeggerath's comments on this important document were as follows:

'This programme can certainly not be accepted by Germany as it stands; but it is not so far removed from a programme acceptable to Germany that negotiations could not build a bridge.

'The British supporters of the peace of understanding have just been hoisting clear signals to Germany: "Continue the peace conversations." "Out with your war aims." Grey's organ, the *Westminster Gazette*, addresses itself again and again to the Kaiser and the Chancellor and invites them to remove all doubt regarding Germany's intentions. Wilson is continually being requested to pass on information on Germany's conditions to the British public.'

> 'May we point out to Mr. Wilson that the next practical step is to tell us, if he knows, what the German conditions are, or, if he does not know, to induce the Germans to disclose their conditions.'[1]

'If German statesmanship is deaf to this appeal, the move of the Chancellor which began with our peace offer comes to a sorry end. On the other hand the German Government is in a position to place the basis of a possible understanding before Wilson and the British friends of peace with such clarity that these actual and potential holders of power must regard the continuation of the war as senseless. This means that we must establish contact with three movements which appear as the international situation now stands to be irresistible and which have taken a decisive part in shaping Wilson's message to the Senate[2] and the moderate British programme.'

[1] *Westminster Gazette*, 23rd January, 1917. [2] 22nd January, 1917.

'Germany has nothing to retract if she desires to associate herself with these movements. We have already been in touch with them during the war:

1. Freedom of the Seas. (Abolition of the right of capture at sea, real security for the import and export of supplies destined only for the civil population, etc.) An old German and American programme, put forward repeatedly during the war by the German Chancellor as a German war aim, and advocated by the German Ambassador in America.

2. Safeguarding of the small nationalities. Proclaimed more than once by the Chancellor, especially in the speech of 5th April, 1916. We had a better chance than the Entente to turn this item to account, for while they were talking of the liberation of the peoples, we were fighting for and securing the liberation of small nations.

3. The League of Peace, cordially accepted by the German Chancellor in his November speech.

Within the four corners of this programme an unequivocal declaration on Belgium could easily be made.'

The objection that after the scornful rejection of our peace offer it was scarcely consonant with the national dignity to talk any longer of peace, was swept aside by Noeggerath. Wilson's first enquiry,[1] still lying unanswered, gave us an obvious handle for a statement of war aims, preferably in reply to a question in the Reichstag. Noeggerath's group had proposed to the Chancellor that he should make a speech defining our programme and introduce it somewhat as follows:

'Wilson is asking the belligerent nations to explain why this war, which is confronting all neutrals with momentous decisions, is still going on. We believe that no belligerent power can take the responsibility of rejecting this request of the President. The American people has a right to know what is at stake and who is the aggressor and who the defender in this war. . . . We really only needed to point to the declarations of the German Government. But we must not close our eyes to the fact that the position of our armies on enemy territory makes it easy for our enemies to

[1] 21st December, 1916.

falsify the motives which made us draw the sword. Nor can we deny that a righteous wrath against our enemies has called forth moods and currents of feeling in Germany which reach beyond the original motives of German policy and demand a war of revenge which will register the humiliation of all the enemies around us on the map. I remind you of the memorandum of the six Associations, which has found its way abroad and was no doubt calculated to terrify the world. In fact, if our victorious armies were guided by the Napoleonic spirit of conquest displayed in this candid petition, not only enemy but even neutral countries might well feel their security threatened. Thoughtful patriots have recently approached the Government and have confessed that they feel—not indeed a suspicion that the German Government could be influenced by such plans of world conquest—but some doubt whether the Imperial Government is still justified, in view of its war aims, in declaring that the war is a war of defence for Germany. Can we wonder that the same doubts keep reaching us from neutral countries too? I have therefore communicated the following war aims to President Wilson. . . .'

I asked what practical results were expected from such a step. The answer was: Whether the newly formed peace party would be strong enough to overthrow Lloyd George or bring him round, nobody here can prophesy. Only this much is certain, that it would be a powerful force among the public; and the British war machine is so delicately built that it could not hold out permanently against a patriotic opposition to the war.

But the really important result will be the alienation between Britain and America. We must try to win the diplomatic event with Wilson and the American public looking on. Germany must both be and be seen to be without blame for the continuation of the war. In Britain there is deep concern at the prospect of such a development. It is not only Wilson, in his interventionist mood, that people are afraid of offending. Thoughtful Englishmen are now conscious that the President is backed by the pacifism of

the American people, who elected him to keep the United States out of the war.[1] Grey's paper, the *Westminster Gazette*, warns its readers (3rd January, 1917) against the illusion that the majority of Americans hold the same view as the Eastern States.

> 'The high cost of living . . . is pressing severely on everybody, and the high prices are attributed to the war. Thousands of persons to whom the war has brought no profit, but only desperate struggles to make both ends meet, now want peace so that they may keep out of debt. It is useless to say to these that other people in America have made large profits out of the war; they reply that they are the majority, and the war brings them nothing but loss . . .
>
> 'For good or evil we have to realize that the President is in a position of great power, and that if he has the American people behind him and makes himself the spokesman of the other neutrals, we are bound to treat him as a very serious factor at this stage of the war.'

According to the *Times* of 2nd January, 1917, Count Bernstorff is busy trying to saddle the Allies in the eyes of the American people with the responsibility for the continuation of the war. He is credited with two motives; the first being to exploit the American love of peace in the interest of a restriction of the export of material and money to the Allies,[2] and the second to induce Washington to deal gently

[1] Bernstorff, *Deutschland und Amerika*, Berlin, 1920, p. 300: 'Immediately after the official announcement of his re-election the President wrote a peace mediation note but unfortunately kept it in his writing desk because by ill luck a fresh wave of hostility to Germany was just then passing over the country because of the Belgian deportations. . . . If this fatal measure had not been taken . . . a measure which was moreover applied at a moment when we had given the President to understand that we did not wish to annex Belgium, the history of the world would presumably have taken a different course. The American mediation move would have anticipated our peace offer and as a consequence would probably have succeeded, because we could not in that case have adopted the unrestricted U-boat war without giving the mediation effort its chance.'

[2] Count Bernstorff, as we now know, telegraphed to Berlin almost simultaneously (29th December, 1916). He was convinced that our enemies would not enter negotiations unless a strong pressure was exercised from America. 'The latter will in my opinion come about if Your Excellency thinks after all that you can accept American mediation. Apart from the Belgian question the Washington Government would

with the further infractions of international law which Germany has in view.

Bernstorff, in Noeggerath's opinion, can do great things if the German Chancellor comes to his aid. The two bugbears of British policy, the embargo [1] and American toleration of the intensified submarine war might become realities if after a temperate German declaration of war aims the Allies were to repudiate peace with their usual brutality. In that case we shall have placed a clear issue before the American public : The peace which is recognized to be just by Wilson, by the British peace party and by Germany is foundering on the bad will of the Allies. If Germany carries the political move [2] begun on 12th December to its natural conclusion, she might quite well be able to declare the intensified submarine war without America breaking off diplomatic relations ; provided, that is, that a time limit is set to it. In other words the declaration must be accompanied by a pledge that as soon as Britain returns with her blockade within the bounds of the international law hitherto in force, the intensification of the submarine war shall cease.

Russia out of action ; Britain incapable of her maximum effort and with her power to hold the Allies together decisively weakened ; Britain in serious conflict with the United States ; here is a sure way to a decent peace or to victory. But the essential condition is that the political offensive be continued and the submarine war postponed.

On the other hand, if the German Government does not decide to defer the intensified submarine war, it brings in

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bring us more advantage than disadvantage in all matters under negotiation since the Americans have now for the first time realized what the naval domination of England means.' (Bernstorff, *op. cit.* p. 323). A first turn of the screw was applied by Wilson at the beginning of December —the Federal Reserve Board, the authority corresponding to our Reichsbank, warned the banks against uncovered bonds (loans) to foreign states ; this practically cut off the supply of American money for the Entente at its source. (*Ibid.* p. 329.)

[1] Cf. House's report of a conversation with Lloyd George of 2nd June, 1915. ' He stated that it would be a serious menace to the Allied cause if we should stop the shipment of munitions of war at this time.' (House, *op. cit.* I. p. 468.)

[2] See p. 52.

America, with her inexhaustible and incalculable fighting strength, on the side of the Allies. That is a more than equivalent compensation for the probable defection of Russia. Then Lloyd George has the British nation behind him for his knock-out blow. That is the sure way to Germany's defeat.

When we look back, it does appear to us that only men smitten with blindness could make the wrong choice.[1] The Chancellor, in fact, broke off a second battle of the Marne when he brought his public peace conversation with Wilson to an abrupt end.

I was deeply impressed at the time by the case that was laid before me. I also attempted in conversations with official people to plead the necessity for a postponement of the intensified submarine war, but could not carry conviction against counter-pleas, because I suffered from the natural uncertainty of one who is not in possession of all-round information. The objection which baffled me was this ; that the success of the intensified submarine war depended on its being begun on the 1st February. England must be beaten before the new harvest.

On 27th January a ' retarding moment ' came into play. Count Bernstorff telegraphed at the request of President Wilson, who desired to undertake a new peace step. Would we favour him with our peace conditions for publication ? Bernstorff pressed once more for a postponement of

[1] Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-five Years*, 1892-1916, London, 1925, II., p. 131, declares : ' In the light of after-events, it is clear that Germany missed a great opportunity of peace. If she had accepted the Wilson policy, and was ready to agree to a Conference, the Allies could not have refused. They were dependent on American supplies ; they could not have risked the ill-will of the Government of the United States, still less a *rapprochement* between the United States and Germany ; ' and on p. 155 : ' There was one mistake in diplomacy that, if it had been made, would have been fatal to the cause of the Allies. It was carefully avoided. This cardinal mistake would have been a breach with the United States, not necessarily a rupture, but a state of things that would have provoked American interference with the blockade, or led to an embargo on exports of munitions from the United States. Germany, on the other hand, did make this cardinal mistake.'

the submarine war. The initiated were aware of the fact of this dispatch at the time.[1] They were not aware either of the entreaty in its language or of the compelling force of its arguments.

A final attempt was made. Zimmermann, the Secretary of State, was at Army Headquarters. Noeggerath called on an influential soldier, who worked in close touch with Ludendorff, and was then in Berlin.

Here, he said, is a new peace move of Wilson's coming along. Wait six weeks more. If Wilson is rebuffed by the Allies, you can carry on the submarine war without America's intervention.

Noeggerath succeeded in having himself put through on the telephone to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He implored Zimmermann in passionate language—not

[1] The dispatch ran : ' Washington, 27th January, 1917. House asked me *ultro* at Wilson's instruction to call on him and said what follows to me as the official instruction of the President. Wilson offers in the first instance confidentially peace mediation on the basis of his message to Senate, *i.e.*, therefore without interference in territorial peace conditions. Wilson at the same time regards the request addressed to us for communication of our peace conditions as non-confidential.' Since our enemies have publicly informed us of their impossible peace conditions, we were also morally obliged to announce our conditions, which according to our communications were moderate and which he would then make known to the whole world. ' If we only have confidence in him, the President is convinced that he could then bring about both peace conferences. . . . The President thinks that the note addressed to him by the Entente is bluff and need not be taken into consideration. He certainly hopes to bring about peace conferences and so quickly that unnecessary bloodshed of the spring offensive will be prevented. . . . If submarine war is now begun without further ado, the President would regard this as a slap in the face, and war with the United States is inevitable. War party here will gain upper hand and termination of the war will in my opinion be out of sight since resources of the United States in spite of all that may be said to contrary, are very great. On the other hand, if we accept Wilson's proposal, but plans notwithstanding come to grief on the obstinacy of our opponents, it will become very difficult for the President to enter the war against us even if we then begin unrestricted submarine war. What is in question is therefore provisionally only a postponement of short duration in order to improve our diplomatic position. Personally I confess to the opinion that we will attain a better peace now by means of conferences than when the United States join our enemies.' (Bernstorff, *op. cit.* p. 373 ff.)

indeed to abandon—but to postpone the submarine war. Zimmermann declined.

When the fateful decision was seen to be irrevocable, an attempt was made by the Central Office to influence the form of the note to be sent to Wilson. There appeared to be a slender hope of avoiding the breach of relations with America if Germany set a time limit to the intensified submarine war, in other words, promised to suspend it the moment Wilson carried his standpoint in the blockade question. It was further recommended that the character of the submarine war as a reprisal against the blockade should not only be formally argued but also morally justified. The sluggish imagination of foreign countries needed assistance. We must in fact paint the sufferings of the German women and children and above all of the sick and the aged in such living detail that the sympathy of mankind would be aroused no less by their fate than it was by that of the victims of our naval war. The aid of Geheimrat Simons, the legal adviser to the Foreign Office, was called in. He at once agreed with the above line of thought, and declared it to be the only arguable basis for the submarine war.

Simons worked out a draft note on these lines. Zimmermann laid it before Army Headquarters. There the proposal of a time limit to the submarine war was rejected.

On 31st January Paul Rohrbach was summoned to Herr Meyer-Gerhardt [1] who had urged strongly that this time the suffering of the German non-combatants should not be veiled for short-sighted reasons of tactics. Herr Meyer-Gerhardt told Paul Rohrbach that unfortunately it had proved impossible to bring the powerful philanthropic argument into play. The Ministry of Health [2] had just published a declaration showing what a favourable influence

[1] Herr Meyer-Gerhardt had assisted Dernburg in his propaganda campaign in America and during the 'Lusitania' crisis was sent by Bernstorff to Germany, with Wilson's approval, to bring over the first detailed oral report on the American situation and the content of the conversations of Bernstorff with Wilson. (Bernstorff, *op. cit.* p. 152.)

[2] I am not quite sure whether the Ministry of Health or another official authority was mentioned.

the war food regime was having on the health of the German people.[1]

[1] Bernstorff had a similar experience. German Americans were collecting money by extensive propaganda to provide milk for the German babies in spite of the British blockade. At that very moment the American State Department published a report written with the consent, if not under the inspiration of the German Foreign Office, showing how favourable the position was in regard to milk and in regard to the German babies in general. This report cut the ground under the feet of the relief work. (Bernstorff, *op. cit.* pp. 256-7.)

CHAPTER IV

OFFICIAL PASSIVITY. NEW CONNECTIONS

THE moment our note of 31st January, 1917, was handed over, we had to reckon with the certainty that America would break off diplomatic relations and that her declaration of war was only a question of weeks or months. But this sequence of events had naturally been expected from the beginning. Nothing remained but to resist the promptings of pessimism as far as one could and to hope that the Navy would be proved right.

In another important point I was equally unwilling to believe in the gloomy prognostication of the Central Office. I still thought a separate peace with Russia possible, if the Tsar could only be brought to see that peace was his last hope of saving his throne and empire.

On the other hand there was no denying that the experiences of the latter days of January had shaken the reverence and faith with which I looked to the pilots of our fate. Where was the long shaping will? I was terrified by the preponderance which military necessity had gained over statesmanlike considerations. Russia's and Britain's internal difficulties were perhaps rated too high by the Central Office; but I felt that they had been found wanting without being duly weighed in the balance.

One clear conclusion followed from the impressions I had received: Something more was needed now from the thinking patriot than uncritical loyalty to his leaders. It was his duty to follow important decisions affecting war policy with a far greater alertness, and inform himself as fully and accurately as his position allows.

I stayed on in Berlin over February and asked Noeggerath, who as an American might have to leave at any moment, to

give me access to the sources of information which had been at his disposal in recent years. And so I made the personal acquaintance of a number of men in Rohrbach's circle, and was initiated into the inner workings of the Central Office for Foreign News Service. The Office had been founded at the beginning of the war and was now in process of transformation. Paul Rohrbach had been for some time in strained relations with the Foreign Office. The first difference of opinion arose over the Armenian question. Rohrbach had of course no doubt that Germany was doing all she could behind the scenes to stop the Turkish atrocities. But—especially since the Allies had publicly pledged themselves to Constantinople as a Russian 'war aim'—he held that Germany's position was strong enough to justify a bolder procedure. This was no less than to put public pressure on Turkey, in the first instance through private individuals of high standing. The Russian policy of the Foreign Office had then led to the final conflict. The reports of Axel Schmid, one of Rohrbach's readers, was held to show bias. His repeated references to the appoaching Russian revolution had first rendered him suspect; and only a few weeks ago he had been instructed to furnish material from the Russian press which went to show that the position of Protopopof was secure. Axel Schmid had refused, and gave as his reason that while Protopopof could no doubt affix his signature to a treaty of peace at Stockholm, he would immediately be swept away by the powerful Liberal war party, even if he were not marched off to the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. Schmid was then requested to resign. Rohrbach stood by his press reader and broke off his official connection with the Foreign Office.

With Rohrbach's departure the Press Office lost its independent character. Individual readers were taken over by the News Section of the Foreign Office. Hahn was claimed by Colonel von Haeften, who had been in charge of the Military Section of the Foreign Office since the summer of 1916. At first the transfer of the English reader met with obstacles. After the declaration of the intensified submarine

war he had had a sharp encounter with the Foreign Office. He was convinced that the diplomats had thrown up the struggle against the military authorities too soon, and had again summarized his reasons in a memorandum which closed with the bitter words :

'The British Government not only prayed that the German decision might be what it was, but has worked for it with all the resources of publicity and diplomacy. The Entente notes may well have appeared to us to be mad, since they could only weld our Allies closer to us. But there was method in this madness,—the method of the *agent provocateur*.'

This memorandum went also to Colonel Haeften. The Foreign Office was furious. When Hahn was about to undertake the English work in the military section, a protest was entered on the ground that a man who represented views so diametrically opposed to those of the Foreign Office, ought not to be in charge of a routine report to the Army Command.

Haeften refused to surrender his right to provide the Army Command with independent information if he thought it valuable. And so Hahn was with Colonel Haeften from the spring of 1917 till October 1918, and was able to state his views without the least restriction of his freedom of opinion.

I had many talks with different members of Rohrbach's group. I was continually being pressed to use my influence ; now it was in the matter of propaganda, again it was in connection with the Belgian deportations. But above all I was requested, in case a miracle should happen and the constellation of January 1917 should again take shape, to intervene with the Kaiser so that the fair opportunity might not again be allowed to pass. These gentlemen appeared to think that the Federal Princes and the heirs to their thrones were continually being called to council.

I always pointed out how little inclination I felt to give advice unasked. In the prisoner question I had an established position, which rested on experience, and, I think I can claim, on expert knowledge. But in high politics I still felt myself a layman.

But Rohrbach and his friends pressed for my assistance with plea after plea. It was time, they said, that the Princes came in and took a hand. And finally an instance of the political passivity of our official authorities was brought to my notice which fairly staggered me.[1]

On the occasion of a visit to Kurland in the summer of 1916 Rohrbach had attempted to obtain an interview with the Field-Marshal himself, and if possible, win his support for the idea that a new advance in the East should be accompanied and aided by a political attack on the British home front. Rohrbach did not succeed in seeing the Field-Marshal, but he saw Generals Ludendorff and Hoffmann. He at once found that Hoffmann was at one with him in his Western policy.[2] General Ludendorff insisted that the plan advocated by Rohrbach since the summer of 1915—to end the war against a practically exhausted Russia by an attack on St. Petersburg—had been the only right one. He described the resolution to seek a decision in the West by an attack on Verdun as a crime. It was in Kovno that the words were spoken : ' The year 1916 is being dawdled away in blood.' But the proposal that we should renounce provocative war aims in the West, was rejected by Ludendorff with the remark : ' That is politics and as a soldier I have nothing to do with politics. But if I were to take up politics, my politics would be : " I hate England." ' To his question whether he could see the Field-Marshal, Rohrbach received the reply : ' The Duke of Brunswick is with his Excellency ; but in any case I have no intention of giving you an opportunity to place your views before the Field-Marshal.'

Where was the statesman who could stand up to this ? In 1916 Rohrbach would fain have won Bethmann over to his plan for a military stroke in the East, and a political stroke in

[1] I reproduce the substance of the proceedings. I can, of course, not guarantee the exact language even where I have inserted inverted commas for the sake of clearness.

[2] Cf. Max Hoffmann, *Der Krieg der versäumten Gelegenheiten*, Munich, 1923, p. 232 : ' I believe that a peace on the *status quo ante* would have been attainable in 1917 if we had renounced Belgium without more ado.'

the West. He received the impression that Bethmann did not regard it as his duty to make his influence felt in the imposition of a political aim on great strategical decisions.

This renunciation of any effort to influence the political shaping of the war appeared with surprising candour in a leading article in the official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* which wanted to settle the public controversy on war aims with the exhortation : First strike and then ask questions ! [1] Rohrbach and his friends appealed to Clausewitz to support a different view : It is the duty of the commander in the field to ask the statesman *what* he wishes to attain by the war that Germany is fighting, and the answer which he receives must influence him in his decision *where* to strike. One often thinks of Bertrand Russell's saying : ' Lord Northcliffe makes history without knowing it,' and is tempted to turn it about and apply it to the German Chancellor : ' Bethmann Hollweg knows history without making it.' Just as he hesitates to assert himself and his will in the War Council, so he does not trust his power to make a decisive impression on home and foreign public opinion. He undervalues the importance of words, above all of his own words. He has the ear of the world when he speaks ; even in enemy countries people are conscious of the honesty behind his speeches. As in poetry so in high politics—where there is no real inner experience, the words ring out but men are not moved. The Chancellor is clearly unconscious of the power to move men that stirs within him. If he were to pass to the attack against the Pan-Germans he could raise an irresistible popular movement to back himself and his policy. What is urgently needed is another explosion like that which took place in 1911 when the Chancellor lost his patience with Herr von Heydebrandt and called to him not to be always wearing the German sword in his mouth. But lack of self-confidence is not the only reason for his inaction. He cannot rid himself of the phantom of the truce of God. His reply to Rohrbach was that ' we must not break the united front.' The united front was broken long ago. And in any case it would be our

[1] ' Erst schlagen, dann fragen.'

duty to invent a patriotic opposition if it did not exist. The annexationists do harm only so long as their opposition to the Government is veiled. If they confronted the Government in open battle, they could prevent a moderate declaration of war aims from giving an impression of weakness.

But the Chancellor is not himself convinced of the efficacy of the declaration on Belgium. For this the Foreign Office is to blame. Herr von Bethmann has no personal knowledge of British mentality. If the Foreign Office had laid the facts about the British war spirit before him vividly enough, Bethmann's political offensive would never have been broken off for the sake of the intensified submarine war at the very moment where it was about to pierce the line. The officials of the Foreign Office cannot divest themselves of the diplomatic point of view. They anticipate that the development of the war will one day produce a situation out of which negotiations will automatically arise, and then they will set to work with all imaginable conscientiousness and dexterity to do the best they can for Germany. Meantime they wait with folded arms, quite unconscious that their own inactivity is putting off the beginning of the negotiations and that for a favourable issue to the negotiations timeliness is of more importance than their dexterity.

The Foreign Office has an underling's idea of its own importance in the war. The reasons lie deep—in a misreading of human nature. These good people are not aware that the result of the war depends on the morale of the nations. They lack subtlety of feeling for currents of public opinion ; the invaluable material for diagnosis provided by the enemy press is not rated highly enough while the importance of agents and trusted informers is overvalued. The more secret their information the better.

It would often appear to be very difficult to secure the undivided attention of the Office. Preoccupation in one direction generally produces deafness to intelligence from other quarters. Now we were waging a war on three fronts even in the political field and it was a mistaken course to neglect possibilities of peace with England because there

seemed to be good reason to hope for a separate peace with Russia.

The tilting of the Right parties against the ' stupidity ' of the Foreign Office is unjust. On the contrary its officials often displayed great acumen and subtlety in the unravelling of this or that difficult situation. All they lacked was imagination, the power to visualise distant, to say nothing of future, events as living realities.

I was told of instances which are almost incredible. On one occasion Rohrbach had submitted a memorandum to the Foreign Office on ' The Internal Political Situation in England and the Possibility of Germany exerting influence on it.' The reply he received was : ' You people really appear to believe that Lord Northcliffe governs England.' In May 1916 a leading diplomat in the Foreign Office sent for the English press reader to have a talk about peace possibilities in England. The diplomat refused to believe that British self-respect demanded the restoration of Belgian sovereignty and integrity : ' You are making a mistake. Look up Asquith's speeches again and read them carefully. You will find that he always mentions only Belgian sovereignty, never Belgian integrity.'

The Foreign Office was not sufficiently careful in its handling of the public utterance.

The English reader was called in to help with the translation of our ' Sussex ' note. The German text included the following remarkable wording of the all-important concession :

' We will sink no ships except after warning and *with the saving of* the crew.' [1]

To the astonished question—why should we go out of our way to direct attention by this complicated phrasing to the most delicate point in the submarine cruiser war, namely, the impossibility of guaranteeing the safety of the lifeboats on a stormy sea ?—the answer was given : ' The Navy demands this wording.' The words had originally been, ' to sink *after* warning and *after* saving.' The translators now proposed to use a harmless form of words selected by Bern-

[1] ' nach Warnung und *unter Rettung* der Besatzung.'

storff on a former occasion: 'We will not sink trading vessels *without* warning and *without* saving the crews.' At first they met with a stiff resistance, until they had the happy idea of suggesting that Simons should be asked to decide. Simons had no difficulty in showing up the psychological impossibility of the formula desired by the Navy. The note was published with Bernstorff's text.

I inquired after the fate of the feelers which had been sent out from Britain to Germany and from Germany to Britain. Was it true that well-founded hopes of peace had come to grief by our fault? The following is the answer I received:

'That certainly cannot be said. But one thing is clear: The reconnaissances in April 1915 and May 1916 [1] ought to have convinced the German Government that a German declaration on Belgium was a political weapon whose use we had no business to renounce. The attempt would at least have been worth while.'

In April 1915 the official reply was: 'We cannot go into this matter. In the first place it is extremely doubtful whether the Dutch gentleman in question [2] is a person to be taken seriously. There were also other circumstances occupying attention. There was the question of our relations with Italy, which had become more and more difficult, and must be straightened out first.'

From a well-informed quarter came the further explanation that it seemed best to ignore this advance for the time being, because there was good reason to hope that an understanding could be come to with Russia by way of Copenhagen.

At the beginning of 1916 the answer of the Foreign Office had been: 'We must now wait for the great British offensive.'

You really felt that you were up against an impervious mentality. Under these circumstances the obvious thing for us to attempt was to bring about a public dialogue between the two Parliaments.

We went to Friedrich Naumann. He is one of the most moving orators in Europe. The individuality of his language

[1] See above pp. 33 f. 45 ff. [2] He was a high Dutch official.

is always fresh, and never fails to grip his hearers. The fire of a great and feeling heart breaks through his shapely periods when you least expect it. We begged him, since the Government, out of a natural regard for public opinion, would clearly not move a finger in the matter of peace, to state in the Reichstag in the name of his party that he regarded the restoration of Belgian integrity and sovereignty as a German debt of honour. We found a ready understanding. But he asked us first to go to Herr von Payer, the chairman of his party, and convince him of the importance of the step we proposed from the point of view of foreign politics.

Herr von Payer cut short the conversation. 'My young friends, what are enemy countries to me? I am a German and my business is with my Fatherland.'

Naumann at once drew back when the leader of his party had spoken with such pungency.

But in October 1916 we succeeded in getting Naumann to make an important speech on foreign policy. No declaration on Belgium was forthcoming; but under the stimulus of the Central Office and with the encouragement of the Foreign Office he passed to the offensive on the moral issue of war guilt.[1]

[1] Extract from Naumann's speech according to the shorthand report of the sixty-fourth sitting of the Reichstag, 11th October, 1916:

'So long as only the Belgian question filled the debate, it was easy for the English to speak of small nations because they could point to the German invasion without being obliged to tell us what they would have done if the Germans had not marched in. But since we have seen their treatment of Greece, since we have made acquaintance with the methods of their pressure on Rumania, since we have learnt how the Scandinavian States and Holland have been harried and worried by England, and Switzerland by France, we are really beginning to understand an expression which occurred a month ago in the English magazine *Truth*, where the little states that trot along in the wake of the British Empire, are described as: "Our protégés and jackals." . . . England is gathering all the peoples of the world in a hostile ring round us Germans and our allies. To this one great league of domination they give the name "Humanity" and "Civilization" and from this one great civilized human family only one member is excluded, that is we and those who stand with us. To weld together this one great mass of humankind with the exclusion of one branch which also we hope consists of God's creatures, they work up the mighty legend that we alone are the enemies of the human race. "German militarism?" It is easy for those to talk of militarism who

He handled the official material with inimitable mastery, but the event of the speech was Naumann's unexpected rally in home politics :

' . . . Out of the trenches a people, grown different in the long war, surges homewards. And when that day comes—we hope for it—we pine for it—when our people comes home from its unending toil, thinking of the dead who lie out there in hundreds of thousands, bringing with them the wounded who have carried but half a life out of the war, when the fighting people streams homewards and marches so to speak as one great whole behind its Kaiser through the Brandenburger Tor, can one then say : Once more you have marched through the Brandenburger Tor ; everything now is as it was before ? That is a sheer moral impossibility.'

As he said these words, he stretched out his arms as if to clasp and hold together the wayward German people. Members pressed to the platform from all sides. On the right there was no word of dissent. A shudder seemed to pass through the whole hall.

Then suddenly a great sadness came over Naumann and he burst into tears. There was a numbing effect in the resignation of this unlooked-for breakdown. It was as if he

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in their island home can say in their isolation : " We do not need a land army. Germany has always been in a different position. Look at the position of Germany, Her army is to her what our fleet is to us—her sole defence against an invasion. Assume that we had a similar situation here, a situation exposing us to invasion. Would we not arm ? Certainly we would arm ! " So spoke in 1908 the same Lloyd George. And now for the second point, that the German Government in July turned down the English peace proposal and plunged humanity into unending misery. It has been justly said : Let England suppose that the Prince of Wales has been murdered on the frontier of Afghanistan. Would England in such a case have accepted a Russian proposal to submit this incident to an international conference ? We believe that in such a case England would not have renounced a punitive expedition any more than Austria : what we do not know is whether England's plan, unlike Austria's, would not have from the first included some accession of territory. There was, as the British Foreign Office itself saw, a better way to peace, namely, the mediation of a direct exchange of views between Russia and Austria. Germany went to the bounds of possibility to save peace by this method. It would according to all human probability have been a promising step if England had played the same rôle in St. Petersburg as Germany played in Vienna. Everything was going smoothly when the Russian mobilization turned the political discussion into a question for the soldiers

would say : ' I have so often roused the conscience of the nation by my faith and my words but it has always turned again to rest.'

But the onlookers have the feeling that Naumann is not without blame if practical politics see the great movement of conscience which he has kindled running to waste. Naumann will open men's hearts, but leaves the further task to others. It is not for him to threaten and to insist in public, to warn and to press in private, as men must if they wish to be a power in politics. It is enough for Naumann to point ever and again, with a dwindling hope, to the path of deliverance. But the German people will never tread that path unless it is led along it.

Naumann was repeatedly approached with requests to put his shoulder behind this or that political move. On one occasion he gave it out as his principle that outsiders who were not in possession of all-round information ought not to increase the burden of the men in charge by criticism and pressure, for their responsibility was superhuman.

This was at bottom the attitude of most of the members of Parliament who supported the policy of the Chancellor. They were blind to the fact that in given circumstances Bethmann might be grateful for any pressure which urged him forward on his own course. The result was that at the decisive War Council (which took place at Pless on 19th January, 1917) Bethmann was not in a position to point to any parliamentary backing.[1]

[1] Bethmann Hollweg, *Friedensangebot und U-Bootkrieg*, Berlin, 1919, p. 20 : ' The Centre had declared in October 1916 in the name of all its members that I alone was responsible to the Reichstag for political decisions on the conduct of the war, but that at the same time my decision would have to base itself essentially on the resolution of the Supreme Command. If the decision is for the ruthless U-boat war I can be assured of the consent of the Reichstag. That meant that the Chancellor remains *formally* responsible, but in case of a difference with the Supreme Command he can count on no backing in the Reichstag. The Reichstag follows the Supreme Command. Thereby, since Conservatives and National Liberals had already for some time been unqualified and insistent champions of the U-boat war, the parliamentary ring was closed. The Reichstag had assumed a responsibility for the course of events from which it cannot rid itself even in the future.'

We also sought help outside Parliament. In May 1916, with the Hague discussions fresh in their minds, two of Rohrbach's associates went to Ballin, in whose influence with the Kaiser hopes were placed. Ballin failed them. He said that there had been serious possibilities of peace in the spring of 1915, but now the whole of Britain was determined on a continuation of the war to the bitter end. He had had this opinion confirmed the day before by a gentleman who had lunched with the King of England only a fortnight ago.

Then Harnack was appealed to for help. He was then and continued to be in intimate relations with the Kaiser and the Chancellor. Harnack thought our account of the conversation between Grey and MacDonald very illuminating.[1] He saw clearly the unique opportunity which it gave the Chancellor to put MacDonald in the right and Grey in the wrong.

Then suddenly he rose and said in a tone of the deepest dejection: 'Gentlemen, the policy which you recommend would be our salvation; but I fear that the German people is not yet ripe for it. They must go on being worn down for a long time yet.'

The reply was: 'With a worn-out people behind him the Chancellor can no longer carry out his policy.'

Harnack then consented to call on Bethmann, but only on condition that inquiry were first made of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Jagow, whether a visit by him to the Chancellor was likely to serve any purpose.

His visit to the Chancellor did not take place.

Hans Delbrueck is Harnack's brother-in-law and shares his political views. For more than two years he has been pleading for the peace of understanding in the *Prussian Annual*. He has rightly been called the father of this idea. He even ventured to demand the restoration of Belgium when we were in front of Paris, before the reverse on the Marne.[2] Since the latter part of 1914 he has presided every Wednesday

[1] See p. 46 f.

[2] Cf. his articles 'Der realpolitische Pazifismus' ('Pacifism as Political Realism'), and 'Beispiel Napoleons' ('The Example of Napoleon'), *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, Vol. CLXVII., No. 3.

evening over a gathering of his political confrères, who include high officials, scholars, and also some members of parliament. The feeling at the January meetings, while the intensified submarine war was counted upon as a certainty, was one of the deepest gloom. One was tempted to adapt a line from the *Iliad*: 'And so they keened for Germany, while she yet lived.'

An outsider appeared at one of these meetings who knew that try as the leading men might to suppress their doubts and gloomy forebodings, they kept recurring and would give them no rest. He appealed to the gathering: 'Intervene at the last hour. The balance is still trembling. A warning from such an important quarter may tilt the scale. No decision is irrevocable until it has been carried out.'

The answer of these gentlemen, including even Hans Delbrueck, showed a reserve which was simply incomprehensible. They said that the decision which had been taken must not be made harder for the Government than it was already.

Finally, my notice was called to an incident arising out of my own special sphere of interest which appeared to my associates to offer the best possible proof of the necessity for my personal intervention. And indeed the case put before me filled me with dread, as showing how distasteful and even detestable it was to Germans of intellectual eminence to touch common things and assume personal responsibility.

Johannes Lepsius[1] and Siegmund Schultze had succeeded in getting the War Office to back a new project.

[1] Dr. Johannes Lepsius was a great scholar with the soul of an artist, an artist with the spirit of a missionary. He controlled the written and the spoken word as few men do. His dramatic satires on England are among the wittiest and most spirited creations of the war period. This thinker and fighter could certainly have done our propaganda immense service if his co-operation had been asked. Unfortunately he came into a sharp conflict with the Foreign Office. Lepsius was director of the German Orient Mission. He regarded it as his life work to organize the protection of Europe for the Armenian people, which was threatened with annihilation. At the beginning of the war he went to Turkey and came back with crushing evidence against the Turkish Government. It was mainly German and American witnesses whom he quoted to prove the guilt of the Turks in the Armenian massacres. He was unable to agree

A commission of independent people, mainly scholars, was to be formed and given the right to visit the German prison camps both at stated intervals and without notice. They were all to be men of such unchallengeable international standing that their testimony could not be set aside even in enemy countries. The War Office was told that the chief purpose of the organization would be to defend our good name, the idea being that it should arrange for a flow of private and public information to foreign countries, and so frustrate the rise of atrocity legends. And beneath the scheme there lay the silent hope that prompt information might place the War Office in a position to put a quick stop to any hardships or petty annoyances which subordinate officials were inflicting.

The whole plan stood or fell by the consent of a particular person to serve as head of the commission. The person in view was a scholar who was held in the highest respect all over the civilized world. The *Manchester Guardian* had said of him during the war : ' His name is loved in England even now.' All this was urged on the gentleman in question. He took a short time to think the matter over and then wrote the devastating reply that it was distasteful to him as a civilian to concern himself with military matters.

All these experiences were calculated to produce a feeling of hopelessness. Then towards the end of 1916 Lieutenant-Colonel von Haeften, of the General Staff, had come into touch with Rohrbach's group. He had more than once attended the conference of the press readers, being anxious

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with the official theology, which in his view ought to find a place for the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount even in war. Against the will of the Foreign Office and the warnings of well-meaning friends he broadcasted in 1916 a printed report on the Turkish atrocities in thousands of copies. Then he went to the Hague and there, in close touch with Rohrbach's group, examined the international situation for possibilities of a peace of understanding. He had been convinced for a decade that the Anglo-Russian antagonism in Asia Minor could not be permanently removed while on the other hand an Anglo-German understanding on the Turkish question was in the private interest of both Powers. He regarded it as England's and Germany's responsibility before history to intervene as ordering and protecting forces in the destinies of the alien peoples on Turkish soil, even in the interest of Turkey herself.

that Ludendorff should have important items of news from the enemy press placed before him as speedily as possible.

One incident was significant. Haeften asked the readers what the effect of the Belgian deportations had been. One after the other pointed out the damage which these measures had done to Germany's good name and the incalculable service they had done the enemy. Haeften was aghast; but at once there came a light into his eyes which made it clear to everyone present that here at last was the will and the power to bring relief: 'I beg you, gentlemen, to suggest a method by which these measures can be revoked without loss of German prestige.'

The suspension of the Belgian deportations now seems assured.

In his dealings with the public and with individuals he was guided by an unerring instinct for a situation. Unlike our German intellectuals he loathed the chasm which so often yawns in Germany between insight and action.

He had indeed a light and happy touch. During the battles in front of Verdun the German and French bulletins were in contradiction for the *n*th time as to who held Fort Douaumont. The correspondent of an Argentine newspaper, Colonel Kinkelin, came to Haeften and begged to be told the truth. Haeften went to the telephone and in the presence of the correspondent he called up Army Headquarters on his private line, asked for the Verdun Army and then had himself put through to the staff which was conducting the Douaumont operations. 'Who is holding Douaumont just now?' he asked. He listened to the reply and then turned to the correspondent and said, 'The French.'[1]

[1] Cf. Raymond Swing in the *Chicago Daily News*, (end of 1917): 'For once the right man was found for the exceedingly delicate task of handling the neutral correspondents. He was Lieut.-Col. von Haeften, who before the war was historian in the general staff. He is one of the most lovable and honorable men I have met. He immediately gained the full confidence of the journalists.

'It was his unique virtue to understand the difference between news and propaganda. He knew correspondents had to work in their own way, that no influence or pressure should be brought on them, that they must believe themselves before they could carry conviction to their readers.' There follows the description of the incident mentioned above.

The name of Colonel Haeften was not unknown to me. My cousin, Prince Ernst Hohenlohe, who was at the head of the Red Cross in the North-Eastern area, had told me a shining example of his civil courage. After Haeften had been Ia (first General Staff officer) with Gallwitz at the beginning of the war, he was seconded in the middle of December 1914 to 'North-East'; at the same time he was to be at the disposal of von Moltke, Chief of the Acting General Staff, for special duties. Haeften sees for himself and hears on all sides that Hindenburg is being starved for troops; the Field-Marshal could bring it off if he were only given the necessary forces. About the turn of the year Hindenburg and Ludendorff make pressing representations to von Falkenhayn, the Chief of the General Staff, that the centre of gravity of the war ought to be transferred from the western to the eastern theatre. The result is a sharp conflict between Falkenhayn and 'North-East.' The differences of opinion are fundamental, and when it seems no longer possible that they can be bridged over, Haeften takes it upon himself to lay personally before His Majesty the opinion of the Field-Marshal and to propose in his name that General von Falkenhayn shall be replaced by Moltke *and* Ludendorff. But above all he is to attempt to induce the Kaiser to say the word which will provide 'North-East' with the necessary troops. Hindenburg would not yet have been ready to take over the conduct of the total operations.

In Berlin, on the advice of Prince Hohenlohe, Haeften goes to the Empress, who listens to his report with the keenest sympathy and promises to support his mission to the Kaiser. At Imperial Headquarters the cry of distress of our eastern armies is at first listened to not ungraciously. But feeling suddenly swings round. Haeften is 'transferred,' first to Cologne and later to Antwerp, until Falkenhayn brings him to Berlin in the summer of 1916 to take over the newly-founded Military Section in the Foreign Office.[1]

[1] Cf. Moltke's letter to General Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, Berlin, 23rd January, 1915: 'Major von ——— returned yesterday evening from Grand Headquarters. Before he arrived here, a telegram had already come transferring him to the General Staff of district ——— and ordering

In the Foreign Office they housed him three days. The apparatus, which at once began to show uncanny signs of growth, threatened to burst the walls. It may even have been that the head of the newly-founded section was becoming too much alive for the spirit of the building. Anyhow, they gave him a big building of his own, a requisitioned hotel, Unter den Linden.

I paid him a visit and found all my favourable prepossessions confirmed. We understood each other at once on important matters. He regards the pushing through of a separate peace with Russia as the need of the hour, but suddenly pulls himself up to warn me: 'I can't prove it, but I am ready to swear that something is going to happen in Russia very soon.'

We spoke of General Ludendorff, whom he regards with real hero-worship, without, however, being blind in his judgment. 'The General is certainly accessible to good and moderate advice,' he said cheerfully, and there was a note of confidence in his voice.

Most important for me it was to find that he agreed with me in one of the root problems of our war policy: 'The cleaner the German sword, the sharper it is.'

I parted from Haeften full of hope in the new channel which now lay open for the transmission of opinions and information to the Supreme Command.

During the remaining years of the war I remained in

him to proceed there at once. He left to-day, and so could not carry out his intention to report to you personally. I have lost my right hand man; he was my Ludendorff in my work here. His mission failed completely. It was taken very ungraciously and found no understanding. The excellent fellow risked his career for his country with no thought of himself and was ready to shoulder all the consequences—and now I have been separated from him. The step which he, Your Excellency, I, and the Empress took, all of us guided by the same anxiety for our country and the outcome of the war, has at least had the result that you have now had four army corps placed at your disposal. My request that *everything* that can by any possibility be spared should be withdrawn from the west and sent to the east, remains unfulfilled. Whether it will be possible for you to achieve with these four corps the big success that we need, if we are ever to bring this war to an end, I cannot judge. God grant it may be so.—You know my views; they tally exactly with your own.' (Helmuth v. Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente* 1877 *bis* 1916, Stuttgart. p. 417 ff.

touch with Haeften, either directly, or through Hahn, who became his political assistant.

Haeften continued as head of Military Section (A), afterwards Supreme Command (A), till October 1918. The Section grew bigger and bigger and more motley in its composition. I doubt if any other building in Germany contained at one time so much self-will and so much spirit : General Staff officers and wounded captains with the ' Pour le mérite ' had to work pell-mell with last line rankers with names like Kellermann, Bonsels, Gundolf, Boerries von Muenchhausen, Eulenberg, Moeller van der Bruck,[1] Dr. Eugen Fischer.[2] There too I saw Otto Braun. During the time that his wound kept him away from the front, he was employed in the immediate entourage of Haeften, whose confidence he won and who gave him an opportunity to exercise his creative and constructive gifts.

It needed true leadership to tune this staff to concord and glad service. Haeften kept a tight rein on them all and filled them with a great passion to work for the cause without thoughts of personal prestige. I have heard colleagues of Haeften say that it was not always easy to keep step to his tune. 'He was never angry but sometimes very wrathful. Indiscretions and displays of petty vanity could drive him to fury. Chairs have been known to fly at the wall. There was not a man in the building who would not have gone through fire for him.'

[1] Afterwards leader of the Young Conservative Movement, author of *Das dritte Reich, Geschichte des deutschen Menschen.*

[2] At that time head of the literary section of Military Section A., now General Secretary of the Parliamentary Commission of Investigation.

CHAPTER V

THE COLLAPSE OF THE RUSSIAN MONARCHY. RIGHT AND WRONG IN THE WAR

DURING this stay in Berlin I took the opportunity to say goodbye to my American colleagues in the Prisoner of War organization. I met them in the Young Men's Christian Association and tried to express our thanks to them in an address, which I reproduce here because I would fain do what I can to preserve the memory of these splendid men and of their active charity, in my country :

'I have invited you to come here to thank you before you leave for the work which you have done in our camps. I claim this right both because, at the wish of those who sent you here, I undertook the patronage of your work, and because I am in a position from the evidence of my own eyes and from the reports I have received, to judge of its admirable quality.

'I can assure you that my work with you and your leaders is one of the finest experiences I have had in this war, in which all the foundations on which the life of nations and their relations with each other have hitherto rested, are tottering and are threatened with utter collapse.

'For me this work among the prisoners is a fixed rallying-point for all the thoughts and feelings that enter into that world-embracing charity which refuses to see in a wounded or captive enemy anything but a suffering brother man. The conversations which I have had on this subject with your chiefs, among whom I single out Messrs. Mott, Harte and Hall, I shall never forget, for they have brought me precious enrichment and strengthened my firm belief that in the midst of the cruel struggle which is rending humanity the power of goodness stands unconquerable and can renew its saving strength again and again in the depths of human need.

'We meet at a solemn hour, for your departure means a new and fateful phase of this world war. America, your country,

has severed diplomatic relations with the country to which you came to do a work of human charity. You are leaving Germany at a time when a new cloud looms on the distant horizon. But I note with warm gratitude that your work is not to be abandoned. There could be no finer expression of the idea which you represent in the world ; it is worthy of the great Christian body to which you belong. . . .

'You are leaving Germany surrounded on all sides by enemies and locked in a desperate struggle for her threatened existence. You have made the acquaintance of my country at a time of suffering and hardship, when all the strength of the people is screwed up to its highest tension and directed to a single goal, the maintenance of our national life and the preservation of all that a German holds dear and sacred. Of the ideal values represented in the world by Germany, values which are treasured and prized by millions of your fellow-countrymen, I will not speak to you, for the work you have had to do here is war work, done in a time of war, and this is the side of German life of which you have had the clearest impression. You have made the acquaintance of a people which is bearing its sorrow and suffering with a patience and self-denial which are unique, in reasoned devotion and loyalty to its fatherland. You have come to know the qualities which so impressed your great fellow-countryman, Emerson, when he visited Germany, and which the great Carlyle championed with such convincing energy in England. You have fitted yourselves into the mechanism of the great organization which Germany has created for her one and a half million, and more, of prisoners. . . You can bear witness that there is no lack of will in our War Office to make the lot of the prisoners, a sad lot under any circumstances, as humane and as bearable as possible, and that everything in our power is being done to maintain and enhance their mental and bodily health so far as their colossal number and the great diversity of their type and race makes this possible in the conditions under which Germany is now compelled to live. You have met numerous people in our camps who have thrown themselves with zeal and zest into every means adopted to bring the prisoners relief and happiness. The friction and the difficulties from which human affairs are never free you have accepted and overcome with praiseworthy patience and friendliness. In the camp commanders you have never failed to find support and willing furtherance of your work. And it was a good work. You have brought happiness and comfort wherever

you came, and numerous buildings—churches, workshops and libraries—bear witness to your unremitting industry and to the liberal provision of funds with which your Organization has furnished you.

'My words of thanks can only be a faint reflex of the joy and inner bliss which fill your own hearts; so much I can infer from the Christmas reports which you sent me. So I will be brief. But you can be sure that my gratitude will live on, and that I will always look back with pleasure and with no little pride to the months during which I worked with you as your Patron.

'That I will continue in your absence to follow the ideals which you follow, you will, I think, never have doubted. I am too devoted to the cause of humanity, and too sensitive to the sorrow of captivity ever to be able to cease trying to serve them. And a number of excellent organizations and devoted men are giving themselves to this same service. Keep a kind place for me in your thoughts, and let us all hold fast to our conviction that if the enmity of our countries must afflict us we ourselves can never be enemies. I am sure that when you are far away you will bear witness to the truth which you have seen among us. You who represent the America of humanity, charity, and active goodness will testify to the Germany which you have learnt to know and which our enemies refuse to know, the Germany which, herself racked by suffering and hardship, is doing deeds of kindness without hate, and is respecting and prizing the souls and the bodies of her prisoners because she sees in them suffering fellow-men appealing for sympathy and relief.

'And now, farewell, and take away with you the happiness of those to whom it is given to make others happy, to where the blessing of new work will be your reward.'

Before I left Berlin I decided to bring my efforts for a separate peace with Russia a stage forward. I had originally intended to grope gradually through my correspondence with the Russian ladies to certainty on the question whether the situation at the court of the Tsar was ripe for an effective step. Haeften had confirmed my own feeling that things in Russia would develop rapidly and that time-wasting reconnaissances were no longer in place. My idea was to write direct to the Tsar. The Chancellor, whom I kept informed,

thought that the attempt certainly ought to be made, although he was sceptical about its success.

On my way home in March 1917 I broke my journey at Koburg to visit my aunt, the Duchess Mary, daughter of the Emperor Alexander II. I had previously told her in a letter of my intention to write to the Tsar and asked for her advice and for her good offices in having my letter forwarded. She was a clever strong-willed woman who held fast to her father's traditions and strongly condemned the Russian policy which had led to the conflict with Germany. Her nephew, King George of England, had invited her at the outbreak of the war to leave Germany and go to England, but she declined his invitation with thanks on the ground that she now belonged to Germany. She was deeply distressed that war had broken out between her native land and the German Empire and there was nothing she would have loved more than to help in bringing about peace between the two countries. She had therefore readily promised me her support.

On the evening of 13th March I had put my letter into final shape and I wrote it out in the night. I began by calling the attention of the Emperor Nikolas to the dangers with which a continuation of the war threatened his empire and his dynasty, and then I told him the news that we had received of the co-operation of the British Ambassador in plans to bring about an upheaval in Russia,[1] and refuted the legend which I had come across in letters from Russia that the Emperor William was against a peace with Russia. In conclusion I guarded myself against the possible imputation that my aim was to divide the Tsar from his allies. If he really wanted peace there was no doubt that he could bring about an all-round peace on a basis acceptable to all parties.

Next morning I saw the Duchess. The morning papers were lying on the table. The Duchess asked me to read her

[1] This information was not quite accurate. British diplomacy in Russia aimed not at an upheaval but at a peaceful change over in favour of the Duma block; for it feared that any revolution would smash the Russian war machine. See Appendix I.

the telegrams. As I opened the first newspaper, my eye fell on the news of the abdication of the Tsar.

This was a heavy blow to my plans and also to me personally. The threads that bound me to my mother's home-land were snapped. I had many memories associated with the Tsar's court. With the Tsar himself I had been on friendly terms since my youth. I was aware of the essential nobility of his nature, but also of his inability to assert his own good impulses against outside influences. It pained me in particular that I should no longer be in a position to do anything for our prisoners in Russia.

The Russo-German understanding was now in pieces. The new forces would certainly not have anything to do with it. But even if Russia's war spirit should blaze up more strongly than ever, her war *strength* was as good as spent. The Russian revolution meant victory for Germany unless America now kept the Entente on its feet. If the calculation of the Navy proves wrong now, the declaration of the intensified submarine war becomes an act of madness. In that case we have saved the Entente.

On 5th April the United States declared war on us.

The American declaration of war did not at first strike us with the weight that one might have expected. The Navy's figures of sinkings were favourable, and most people allowed their hopes to soar—among them many who were full of gloomy doubts and forebodings : ' They were whistling,' as Solf put it, ' to keep up their courage.' But deep down in the public consciousness the feeling secretly grew that we were now faced by overwhelming odds and that a big pack meant the death of the hare. Our enemies' foreign propaganda received a great impetus as soon as America came in on the side of the Allies, and I observed for the first time that it was making way even among our own people. At the beginning of the war people had laughed at the Allies' sermonizings on right and humanity and thought that the whole world must see through such transparent cant. Early in 1917 one met here and there with cases of a scepticism which was dangerous because it was catching. After America had joined our

enemies there were peculiarly constituted Germans who believed that the stronger must be the purer cause. A superstitious fear raised its head in unexpected quarters; people asked: 'Does Germany deserve to win?' I had believed till now that it was mainly in neutral and enemy countries that the battle for our honour must be fought. But now it was clear that our duty was to hearten the German people. We must succumb as soon as the enemy brings us to the point where we face his superior material resources with a feeling of moral inferiority.

My feeling at the time was that I must sooner or later bear public testimony to Germany's right, but I held it to be my duty first to get as near the truth as I could and try to convert my instinctive feeling of the justice of our cause into an article of knowledge by conscientious research. In the next few months I succeeded in doing so and in reaching complete certainty that when the German people turned like a stag at bay in August 1914, its instinct did not play it false. The millions of Germans who have given their life or their dearest in the comforting belief that they were defending their country against a mortal danger, were not building on sand, but on an historical truth.

I put together the conclusions I reached on individual problems, and they proved to be simply so many answers to doubts which the Entente was deliberately fanning. On later occasions, in public discussions of the question of war guilt, I was able to make use of much of the actual definition which resulted from this study.[1]

1. Was it only considerations of prestige that made Serbia refuse Austrian supervision of the investigation into the murder of Serajevo or was it also a bad conscience?

2. Would Serbia have rejected the Austrian ultimatum if she had not felt sure of Russian support?

3. Did Russia order the general mobilization because she regarded the war as unavoidable or was it rather because she was afraid of the menace of peace?

[1] *E.g.* on 3rd February, 1919, at the inauguration of the Heidelberg Association (Society to Promote the Policy of Justice).

4. Was confidence in the support of Britain the determining factor in the victory of the Russian war party, as was held by the Belgian Chargé d'Affaires, Baron d'Ecailles, by the *Times*, and by Reuter on the 29th, 30th and 31st July, 1914 ?[1]

5. Was it a foregone conclusion for the General Staffs and Chancelleries of Europe that the Russian general mobilization meant war, as Buchanan said on the 25th and Colonel Repington on the 31st July ?

6. What was the order of the mobilizations ?[2]

7. Had Germany a right to be afraid (relative strength of pre-war armaments) ?

8. Where did the long will exist to effect territorial changes in Europe which only a war could bring about ? Were Alsace and Constantinople really only happy thoughts during the war or motive springs of Russian and French policy ?

9. Why was the Russian general mobilization kept secret

[1] Recently published British documents (*The Outbreak of War*, Headlam Morley, London, 1926, Vol. XI.) prove such British influence on the Russian war party : cf. Nicolson's private letter to Buchanan dated 28th July (No. 239).

[2] Order of the mobilizations :

24th July : Cancelling of the demobilization of the British Fleet, which was assembled for manoeuvres.

25th July : 3 p.m.—General mobilization of Serbia.

25th July : Evening—Austrian partial mobilization against Serbia.

26th July : Order for the beginning of the ' period of war preparation ' for the whole of European Russia. On the same day—Order for the beginning of the ' mesures de précaution ' in France.

28th July : Beginning of the ' Sicherheitsmassnahmen ' (measures of security) in Germany.

29th July : ' Warning telegram ' to Army and Fleet in Britain—a measure which corresponds to the ' drohende Kriegsgefahr ' (threatening danger of war) in Germany.

29th July : Order for the Russian partial mobilization.

30th July : Evening—Order for the general mobilization in Russia. In France order for the mounting of the frontier guard.

31st July : 11-30 a.m.—Austrian mobilization order. 1 p.m.—Declaration of the state of threatening danger of war in Germany.

1st August : 4.45 p.m.—Order for the general mobilization in France.

1st August : 5 p.m.—German mobilization order.

Cf. Max Montgelas : ' Die Mobilmachungen des Jahres 1914,' *Die deutsche Nation*, 1st year, Vol. VIII, August 1919, and Georges Demartial *La Guerre de* 1914, *L'Evangile du Quai d'Orsay*, Paris, 1926.

in Paris on the 31st July, 1914, and the German countermeasure against the Russian threat, the declaration of a state of danger of war, represented as a provocation against France ?

10. Why was Jaurès murdered ? [1] Why was the trial of his murderers not proceeded with ?

I have again and again examined the question in the light of subsequent research whether this consciousness of a clean cause was an illusion due to the influence of German war propaganda. It would lead me too far to set down in detail the results of several years of reflection on the question of guilt, but I should like once more to profess my faith in the truth of the following propositions :

The procedure of Austria which was represented as being so provocative, was really an answer to the most unheard-of provocation. To-day it is definitely known that the plans for the murder of Serajevo were made in Belgrade; that high Serbian officers were aware of them ; that people in the Serbian Government knew of the departure of the murderers ; but that after an unsuccessful attempt to hold them up at the frontier, they had allowed the heir to the Austrian throne to go to his death without warning.

Neither the Serbian secret societies nor the Government of Serbia would have raised a hand against the Danube monarchy had they not been assured of Russian solidarity with their objects. Russia encouraged Serbia, and never for a moment doubted that she could rely on France. Her alliance with France had been progressively strengthened ; both nations were moved by great national aims which could only be realized by means of a war.

Russia's ' Drang nach Konstantinopel ' had been notorious since the Berlin Congress and had only been temporarily diverted by tempting schemes in Asia.

The will to reach the Rhine has been operative, with varying intensity, in French history since Richelieu. It was the motive of the raids of Louis XIV., it pointed the way to French expansion in the period of the Revolution and of the

[1] 1st August, 1914.

First Empire, it dominated the imperialism of Napoleon III.,[1] nor had it been extinguished in the heads of certain politicians at the outbreak of the war. The recovery of Alsace-Lorraine was the unfulfilled dream of the French nation and the aim of Poincaré's Presidency.

In August 1914 the aggressive will of the allied French and Russian Governments was driven to action by the feeling that Britain was now at their side, and that they had the superiority by sea and land.[2] But for how long?

Haldane's mission had made the fomenters of war gasp for breath. With perfect consistency Russia precipitated her general mobilization and the outbreak of war the moment the way to a peaceful solution was opened by the agreement of Britain and Germany on the Grey-Lichnowsky formula.[3]

Grey would have welcomed the preservation of peace. All his advice was directed to this end; but the Triple Entente was more to him than peace. Otherwise he would not have neglected to say to Russia 'Our participation in the war depends on how the war originates. If you disregard our advice and wreck the diplomatic situation and convert it into a military one by a general mobilization, we decline to take part in the world conflagration which will follow.'[4]

Although Grey both knew (after 25th July) that there was danger of a general mobilization by Russia, and fully realized its inevitable consequences, he carefully refrained from

[1] This is incontestably proved by H. Oncken, *Die Rheinpolitik Kaiser Napoleons III. von* 1863 *bis* 1870 *und der Ursprung des Krieges von* 1870-71. Stuttgart, 1926.

[2] According to the *Labour Leader* of 24th June, 1915, the 'Novoe Vremya' of 20th July, 1914 wrote: 'Their (the Triple Entente's) superiority on land and sea justifies a more energetic language in the councils of Europe.'

[3] It ran: 'If the Austrian advance is held up in Belgrade, the powers will consider Serbia can satisfy Austria without sacrifice of her sovereign rights and her independence.' ('Die neue Diskussion der Schuldfrage in England,' *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, Vol. CLXVI., part 2, p. 23.)

[4] Compare Bethmann's pointed refusal to Austria in his dispatch to Tschirschky, the German Ambassador in Vienna, on July 30th: 'We are ready to fulfil our duty as allies, but we must decline to allow ourselves to be drawn by Vienna into a world conflagration, wantonly and without regard to our advice'; see above p. 40.

uttering any such warning in St. Petersburg. On the contrary, sign after sign reached Russia, calculated to dispel any fear of British neutrality. Lord Northcliffe said that it would be high treason if Britain were under any circumstance to stay out of the world war; he addressed the terrible phrase, 'mechanism of the Entente,' to Russia, the effect of which in St. Petersburg was registered by his correspondent in the words: 'The articles of the *Times* have done much to inspire hope.'[1] And the retention of the British Fleet on a war footing was like a clarion call to St. Petersburg.

It was Churchill who ordered this measure; but Grey consented to it.

Grey could have prevented the world war if he had threatened Russia with neutrality and Germany with the abandonment of neutrality, according to whether it was by Russia's fault or by the fault of the Central Powers that peace was wrecked. But Grey was doubly paralyzed. He could not use the threat of neutrality because he had bound his honour and the honour of Britain to take part in any war into which France was drawn, whether France were in the right or in the wrong. He was bound less by the conversations between the British and French military authorities than by the distribution of their fleets agreed on between Britain and France. The French coast was unprotected. 'The French Fleet is in the Mediterranean,' said Grey six times in his great speech of 3rd August,[2] when he tried to exorcise the pacifism of the Liberals. On the other hand,

[1] 'I said all I could to impress prudence on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and warned him that if Russia mobilized, Germany would not be content with mere mobilization, or give Russia time to carry out hers, but would probably declare war at once.' (*Great Britain and the European Crisis* (British Blue Book), London, 1914, No. 17, Sir George Buchanan, the Ambassador in St. Petersburg, to Sir Edward Grey on 25th July, 1914.) 'After the 26th (July), the day on which it became certain to it that Russia was pressing forward preparations for mobilization, the German Government did not cease to warn the Russians, French, English, Austrians and Italians that mobilization was equivalent to war; "mobilization means war."' (G. Demartial, *op. cit.* p. 111.)

[2] When Grey made his speech Bethmann's offer not to attack the French coast had already been made.

he could not threaten Germany with war, anyhow, not clearly and brutally enough to dispel German illusions regarding Britain's attitude, because he had for years maintained the fiction in his own House of Commons that Britain had still complete freedom of action.[1]

Even to-day, after the new collection of British documents has appeared, I have no desire to doubt Grey's wish to avoid the war. But his wish never became a straight and firm will. Behind Grey—the most recent publications leave no doubt on the point—stood the permanent officials, who knew what they wanted. They stopped him again and again from uttering a single word in St. Petersburg that could give offence. Britain's friendship with France and Russia must be preserved at any cost, even at the cost of peace ; and if it came to the worst they would not be sorry to see Britain seizing the fair occasion to rid herself of her troublesome naval rival. The decision between peace and war could have been made and should have been made in London. Under the influence of his advisers, Grey transferred it to Paris and St. Petersburg.

I can quite understand that Grey, after the agreements and conversations of recent years, felt himself in honour bound to support France and Russia in any war against Germany and Austria. All the clearer, as it seems to me, became his duty to his own people, who knew nothing of its entanglements, not to leave the decision whether and when the war was to break out to France and Russia.

Sir Thomas Barclay, who has been called the Father of the Entente, says in his Reminiscences (published in April 1914) [2]

[1] On 31st July, 1914, when the British Cabinet still refused to give a binding pledge to France Sir Eyre Crowe wrote to Grey : '. . . The argument that there is no written bond binding us to France, is strictly correct . . . but the *Entente* has been made, strengthened, put to the test and celebrated in a manner justifying the belief that a moral bond was being forged. The whole policy of the *Entente* can have no meaning if it does not signify that in a just quarrel England would stand by her friends. This honourable expectation has been raised. We cannot repudiate it without exposing our good name to grave criticism.' (*British Documents* 1926, No. 369), cf. also Appendix II.

[2] *Thirty Years Anglo-French Reminiscences*, 1876-1906, London, 1914.

that a friend had written him : ' Do you not sometimes mourn at the frightful perversion of the Entente Cordiale from an instrument of peace into the greatest menace now existing of European war ? '

Barclay's reply is : ' That the Entente was perverted is beyond question . . . Fortunately wiser counsels have again prevailed. . . . To-day it would serve no useful object to denounce the fomenters of international strife. They now see the folly of the agitation which sapped the foundations of the European concert.' [1]

It is a pity that Barclay did not denounce the fomenters at the time. To-day, now that the new collection of British documents has appeared, we know that to use Count Montgelas' words the Francophil Grey had a Russophil Under-Secretary (Nicolson) and an extreme Germanophobe First Secretary (Crowe) at his side.

And Germany's guilt ?

The charge that the German military party deliberately unchained the world war need have no terrors for us to-day, now that we know that von Moltke, Chief of the General Staff, was at heart a pacifist, without confidence in his own capacity and without faith in Germany's power to bring a world war to a satisfactory end. His conscientiousness made him delay [2] almost longer than the safety of the Empire allowed before advising the Emperor to order the general mobilization.[3]

But one thing is certain—we bear a measure of blame, through the failure of our political instinct, for Britain's accession to the Entente. I do not believe that Britain would

[1] *Ibid.* p. 283.

[2] Cf. also Haeften's description of Moltke's hesitation in Theobald von Schaefer's article ' Generaloberst von Moltke in den Tagen vor der Mobilmachung und seine Einwirkung auf Oesterreich-Ungarn,' in *Die Kriegsschuldfrage*, IV., No. 8, p. 533 ff.

[3] Count Montgelas proves that on 27th July the German Government could really not have given a promise not to mobilize so long as Russia only mobilized against Austria. Any deployment against Austria, *i.e.* against the northern and eastern frontier of Galicia implied mobilization in the military district of Warsaw ; by this measure the partial mobilization against Austria must be automatically extended to a mobilization against Germany as well.

ever have entered an alliance with Russia and France had she not felt herself threatened by our naval policy. True, behind our shipbuilding programme there stood the Kaiser's will to peace, expressed and proven. The Kaiser, indeed, saw nothing in the fleet but a glorious demonstration of German power, and took a delight in this marvellous instrument which was entirely independent of the use it was to be put to. But it was inevitable that Britain should feel the powerful growth of our sea power to be a danger to her ; and it was only this feeling of being threatened that allowed the anti-German currents to carry the day, both in the British Foreign Office and with the British public. The question whether Britain's fear of the German Fleet was justified has no bearing on the question whether our naval policy was wise or not.[1] Her fear is an historical fact. The battleship ratio of 10 to 16 was not in itself the determining factor for Britain. We ought not to forget that the British did not always feel themselves our match in technical capacity, and when we set out, deaf to the warnings of continental experience, to alarm the great sea power, it was really tempting fortune to bar Russia's road to Constantinople and give her an extra jab on her tender spot by the mission of Liman von Sanders.

There is still a further reproach which Germany cannot be spared. In spite of the vagueness of Grey's language during the final 14 days our statesmen ought not to have harboured the illusion for days on end that the war could be localized between Austria and Serbia.[2] At least from the moment when it became clear that Russia was stiffening Serbia's back,

[1] The first volume of the publications of the Imperial Archives (*Der Weltkrieg* 1914 *bis* 1918, Berlin, 1925) shows that the consolidation of our power on land was seriously neglected in favour of our fleet. This is a bitter thought.

[2] This is in no way altered by the fact that even in Entente circles this desire of Austria was recognized to be justified. Sir M. de Bunsen, the British Ambassador in Vienna, wrote to Grey on the 29th July, 1914 :

(Confidential.)

' French Ambassador is reporting to French Government that he is convinced by admissions of Servian Minister, with whom he was in close contact till Minister departed 26th July, that growing condition

Germany should have realized the full implications of Austria's wish to have done once for all with the Serbian threat, and should have declined her support. There is no doubt that the German Government believed in the first half of July that it could frighten Europe into acquiescence in a punitive expedition against Serbia.

Against the other serious charge, that Germany bears the responsibility for the lawless conduct of the war, I felt that I stood on equally safe ground. On the Belgian question I could come to no other result than Bethmann : ' We have done a wrong and we must make it good.' Attempts to exonerate us by means of documents discovered later, have always appeared to me to be neither sensible nor altogether dignified.[1]

At the time the ' frightfulness ' of our submarine war seemed to eclipse all the other ' misdeeds ' with which we were charged. I admit that the killing of non-combatants by our submarines had troubled my conscience over and over again. Could we justify it otherwise than by military necessity ? I knew how difficult it had been at the outset to overcome the qualms of the Kaiser and of our chivalrous naval officers. Surely the sparing of the lives of passengers was a duty of honour sacred in the eyes of all great sea-faring peoples, a duty which Herr von Mueller, the

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of unrest in Southern Slav provinces of Dual Monarchy was such that Austro-Hungarian Government were compelled either to acquiesce in separation of those provinces or make a desperate effort to retain them by reducing Servia to impotence. Servian Minister always said that time was working for Servia, and he told French Ambassador that within three years Southern Slav provinces would be ready to rise against Austria-Hungary without Servia having to raise her little finger. Austria-Hungary realized she could wait no longer, and determined on war, from which it looks as if nothing would now deter her. French Ambassador thinks this shows that conflict is not due to German instigation and that it does not necessarily show that Germany desires European war, as is thought by many in France.'

(*British Documents*, 1926, No. 265). It was not, however, a question of canvassing the justice of Austria's procedure against Serbia but of recognizing that it gave the Entente a pretext for war.

[1] Cf. Colonel Schwertfeger, *Der geistige Kampf um die Verletzung der belgischen Neutralitaet*, (Ed. 2), p. 18 ff. and 63 f.

commander of the Emden, had honoured in this very war under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty.

I will state the belief to which my methodical investigation led me.

The submarine war in its present political complexion cannot be tolerated by the world's sense of right. It appears to be a cynical extension of belligerent privilege in contempt of the rights of non-combatants and neutrals.

But in the service of the freedom of the seas, as a reprisal against a horrible breach of law by the enemy, which would cease as soon as the enemy returned to the law of nations, the submarine war stands on a firm legal basis which can be made clear to neutrals and enemies.

The following arguments appeared to me conclusive :

1. Britain is conducting a merciless war against the German non-combatant population. ' The ruthless submarine war is a different thing to-day from a year ago. If only the world could see how the German non-combatants are suffering under the British blockade '—those were the words of an American diplomat shortly before the severance of German-American relations.

2. The British hunger war is not only inhuman, it is also illegal according to the international law now in force. Moreover it has been recognized to be contrary to international law by the British Government ; by Salisbury during the Boer war, by Grey in his note of the 7th January, 1915, but above all by the way in which the tightening of the blockade was represented as a reprisal against the German conduct of naval war.[1]

The word ' reprisal ' implies the admission that he who announces it is passing beyond the bounds of international law and more than that, it also implies the promise that he will return within these bounds as soon as the abuse against which the reprisal was declared, is put a stop to.

Germany also originally justified her intensified submarine war as a reprisal.

[1] The following line of argument was used, *e.g.* in an ' interview ' given by Herr von Jagow on 12th May, 1916.

Further, both powers expressly promised to cease their measures of retaliation in so far as they succeed, in other words, bring the enemy back to recognized law—Grey in his 'Wilhelmina' Note of 12th February, 1915, and we four days later. Which of us meant it honestly? Both of us? One of us? Neither of us? There is an infallible touchstone for the *bona fides* of a reprisal. Wilson applied it when he simultaneously took Britain and us at our word and demanded of both powers in an identical note (22nd February,1915) that they should stop the reprisals when the abuse, against which they were declared, ceased. In a note of the 28th February Germany accepted this proposal in its essential lines. On 15th March Britain declined it.

For the British, the policy of retaliation was a pretext to use their sea power as Pitt understood it and Nelson handled it, in other words with no regard to non-combatants and neutrals. This was admitted with astonishing candour by the *Manchester Guardian* in its *War History* (III., p. 240, December 1915).

> 'Had Germany kept within the law in her conduct of the war our position would have remained a very difficult one, and it is doubtful whether we should ever have been able to extricate ourselves from the entanglements of these Declarations [London, Paris, The Hague, etc.]. Fortunately on the whole for us, Germany was not content to let well alone, but by beginning the submarine blockade, and committing a hundred acts of illegal tyranny, presented us with an opportunity of escape.'

True, Germany also seized on every plausible pretext to sharpen her naval weapon by the method of reprisals, but the historical fact remained, that we had accepted Wilson's proposal in essentials and Britain had not. What we now had to do was to keep this honest solution continually before the eyes of the world. I now realized what an opportunity we had missed when on our declaration of the intensified submarine war, we had omitted to announce that it would cease the moment Britain accepted Wilson's standpoint in the blockade question.

The possibility of Britain accepting this proposal was,

especially after Grey's fall, only a very slight one. Still, from the point of view of the Navy we should have been taking a risk, and we had to take it upon ourselves in perfect good faith, without reserve ; only thus could we convince the world and our own conscience of the moral foundation of our naval warfare. We should further strengthen this foundation, if we succeeded in giving our submarine war its place in the battle of principle which America and the continental states had been fighting against Britain for the freedom of the seas for more than a hundred years. It might have been put in this way :

> ' If the freedom of the seas is to be more than a name and is really to give the world the feeling of security which is indispensable for a lasting peace, it must be upheld in war as well as in peace ; at least the progress on the way to the freedom of the seas which had been secured before the war in the sphere of international law and has been lost in this war, must be retrieved before the end of the war.'

America herself had pointed out this way to us when Wilson in his ' Lusitania ' Note (handed over on 21st July, 1915) invited Germany to collaborate with him in a practical fashion.

> ' The Government of the United States will continue to contend for that freedom (the freedom of the seas) . . . without compromise and at any cost. It invites the practical co-operation of the Imperial German Government at this time when co-operation may accomplish most.'

The freedom of the seas should no longer have been only incidentally referred to, as hitherto, but ought to have been put forward as an essential German war aim. We should thus have taken up the Ideal of Right and included it in our national purpose. The enemy were brandishing the torch of world redemption against us. Its light was a lie, but a dazzling lie. We defended ourselves by declaring over and over again that we had a right to existence and development. It became clear to me then that the struggle for existence, if treated as the sole incentive of a nation, leaves immense human resources untapped. Our people could not in the long run escape the insidious sense of inferiority, unless we

reached beyond national egotism and proclaimed war aims which served not only our own interest but the interest of mankind. The freedom of the seas appeared to be a promising step on the right road. I asked myself whether we could not even now make the submarine war serve this great aim and thus purge it of the lawless and inhuman character which it bears before the world ?

I heard that an attempt had been made after the breach with America, to win General Ludendorff to the plan of setting a time-limit to the submarine war *ex post facto*. Ludendorff had declined, saying that he would adopt this method if he had any confidence in the diplomats.

The reason he gave was strange, but from the political standpoint it was quite right not to take any step in the proposed direction for the time being. The nations were watching the Anglo-German duel spell-bound ; it was being fought out on both sides in full consciousness of its grim significance ; and it was to be settled, so we were assured, by the 1st July. Till then the world would not be responsive to political action.

Nor did I seek any opportunity later on to suggest a fresh justification for the submarine war. It seemed to me that even in America war necessity had made the question of the position of the non-combatants under international law a purely academic one. Nevertheless, when I look back I am convinced that we should have set a time-limit to the submarine war if only to make its legal basis clear to our own people, the more so that doubts of its efficacy were increasing. Our failure to do so was a sin of omission, and the reason why the full exposure of our enemies and their hunger-war only came about during the armistice.

The maintenance, aye, even the intensification of the blockade at a time when not only the German submarine war but the whole war so far as Germany was concerned had come to an end, is among the greatest infamies of the century.

May the atrocities on both sides during the war be forgotten ; but I do not hesitate to-day to repeat the bitter

words which I used in February 1919,[1] at a time when our enemies were still killing 800 German non-combatants daily with perfect deliberation :

'The Entente is no longer in a position to say that it is being misled regarding the effect of the blockade by coloured war statistics. The whole of Germany lies open to an impartial investigation of the food situation ; trouble has also been taken to place irrefutable scientific evidence in the hands of the Entente, which shows :

(1) that about 800 human beings in Germany are dying every day from the effects of the blockade ;

(2) that in many centres the mortality among young children has almost doubled ;

(3) that the harvest of tuberculosis among children and growing youths in big cities is twice as large as before the war, while the death-rate of mothers from puerperal fever has increased by two-thirds for the whole of Germany ;

(4) that doctors are helpless in face of many curable cases of illness, because they lack the necessary medicines and foods.

(5) that as a result of underfeeding the whole population is suffering from a nervous exhaustion, which paralyzes initiative and weakens moral restraint.

(6) that hundreds of thousands of mothers are not in a position to nurse their convalescent children back to health, because they cannot feed them up ; that the result in many cases is life-long infirmity ; and that, in a word, the vitality of the growing generation has been sapped at the root. . . .

I would point out the fundamental distinction which must be drawn in the moral judgment between war atrocities and armistice atrocities. War necessity, real or imagined, is no excuse, but it creates extenuating circumstances ; the summoning of all a nation's energies to battle and victory naturally drives humanity and international equity from the place which rightly belongs to them in the hierarchy of motive ; but they must necessarily be restored to their rights, as soon as the guns cease fire. The wrong of war is heavier in the scales, if it lasts after war and the war necessity are at an end. The victims of the armistice bring a more awful indictment before God and mankind than the victims of the war.'

[1] The lecture delivered on 3rd February, 1919, at the foundation of the Society to promote the Policy of Justice is printed in the *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, March, 1919, under the title 'Voelkerbund und Rechtsfriede.'

Our former enemies are now giving us to understand that they are getting tired of our fight against our outlawry. *Proprium ingenii humani est odisse quem laeseris* ('Tis human to hate a man whom you have wronged). I fear that they must bear with us until the Peace of Versailles, built as it is on the lie of war guilt, is revised—against that lie the German people ought to fight on a single front. It fills me with bitter regret that the Social Democrats have broken away from this front, on which they fought so gallantly during the war. It almost looks as if there were people who would rather brand the whole of Germany as a criminal in the eyes of history, than exonerate the old regime. We are ashamed to have to admit the truth of a passage written by E. D. Morel a short time before his death : [1]

> ' A group belonging to the German Left Parties seems to think it right to ignore or to dispute the incontrovertible result of historical research—that the responsibility for the war has to be divided—for fear lest their admission of this truth might weaken the charge against the old regime. . . .
>
> What earthly advantage can it be to the German Left if by speech or silence they take up an attitude to the past which has the effect of white-washing the Government of the Tsar of its responsibility in chief for the war ? '

[1] E. D. Morel, *Das Gift, das zerstoert.* Frankfurt a-M., p. 18.

CHAPTER VI

THE JULY CRISIS

In June 1917 a clear picture could be formed of the situation at the various fronts and especially behind the fronts. Two tremendous events, the Russian revolution and America's entry into the war, had fundamentally altered the world situation.

In Russia catastrophe was staved off as by a miracle. In the earliest period there were two Governments making an equal claim to power, the Duma Committee and the Workers' and Soldiers' Council. Kerenski was Vice-President of the Soviets and at the same time Minister of Justice in the 'Provisional Government.' The Soviets owed their power to the cry for peace and bread, which had broken out with unexpected force at the very beginning of the revolution. Kerenski succeeded again and again in curbing the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. The imperialistic war aims had been buried with the old regime. But Britain and France insisted on their pound of flesh, the concerted co-operation in the campaign of the year. What did the future fate of Russia matter to the Allies if only the Russian armies attacked Austria and tied down German troops ?

In the beginning of May the Allies extract a note from Miliukof, which speaks of a war to a victorious conclusion. The excited masses reply with monster demonstrations, obviously directed by Lenin and the Maximalists. Kerenski succeeds once more in staving off a revolt ; but Miliukof and the War Minister Gutchkof have presently to resign. Kerenski becomes Minister of War and thus the dominating figure in Russia. The second Provisional Government, like its predecessor, repudiates the separate peace with Germany. But it is for different ends that Kerenski wants the continuation of the war. The watch-word, 'No annexations and no

indemnities,' rings out into the world again and again. The clear echo which it finds among the warring nations encourages Kerenski. He entreats the Allied statesmen to tone down their war aims. If this is done, he believes in the maintenance of the Alliance, and in the possibility of a final and victorious effort against ' Prussian militarism,' that sole remaining ' bulwark of autocracy.' He is now much at the front, trying to strengthen the dissolving discipline and rouse new will to battle.

Will he succeed ? Those who know Russia best think it possible that the Russian army may strike once more, but are convinced that chaos in Russia will then be all the surer and swifter.

There was now no telling what would happen on the Eastern front, and the war plans of the Western Allies were revised. The British and French were not at one on the question whether or not it would pay to wait for the Russians. The French wanted to strike at once, the British to wait until the Russians were ready to take their part in the general offensive. On 13th March, 1917, a council of war between Nivelle and Haig had been held in London. The French carried their point, as Haeften was able to inform our Supreme Command on 3rd April. The offensive in Champagne was decided on. Our withdrawal on the Ancre may have turned the decision in favour of the French plan.

A shortening of the front was essential for the easing of our defensive, but General Ludendorff had at first hesitated to undertake it. He was afraid of encouraging the enemy. Haeften had undertaken to get a suggestion spread in enemy countries—through neutral correspondents—that the German withdrawal was covering uncanny plans of Hindenburg's. He had made good his undertaking ; according to British sources the French General Staff, after our withdrawal had been successfully effected, feared a tearing offensive against Soissons. The allied commanders were accused in the Press of a lack of vigilance, since they had failed to prevent Hindenburg's ' success.'

For Nivelle's offensive the drums were loudly beaten in

advance. His successes at Douaumont were absurdly exaggerated, and he was hailed as a new Napoleon. England took only a limited part in this campaign of advertisement.

The dispute over the strategical root problem whether a victory in the West with the available means was possible, had taken a sensational turn in England before the beginning of the offensive. Haig had hurled public defiance at the 'Eastern' sceptics: 'You ask me whether we shall pierce the German front,' he had said to a French journalist, 'of course we shall, and at many places. We will hammer them without remission, until the German armies are destroyed.' He had pointed to the masses of cavalry, which stood ready for the pursuit of the beaten enemy. Then Churchill, the 'amateur strategist,'[1] had taken the platform against Haig. According to him the masses of cavalry in the West were swallowing up more tonnage than the whole Salonika expedition, and they were as superfluous behind the Anglo-French front in 1917 as they had been in 1916. Victory on the Western front was doubtful. 'Brains save blood.'

The offensive which began in the middle of April led to frightful butchery. Its results bore no relation to the losses. Nivelle was relieved of his post on the 17th May, 1917, and Pétain became his successor. He was looked upon as a Cunctator. His programme was known—nothing decisive to be undertaken until America's help was there and an overwhelming superiority in material and men had been assured. Till then we ought to operate only with limited minor offensives. The French army and people had the roughest

[1] The reputation of the 'amateur strategy' was on the increase in England. The report presented in March 1917 by a Commission appointed by Parliament on the Failure of the Dardanelles Expedition did not result in the condemnation of the plan attributed to Churchill. On the contrary its findings were:

1. The idea of striking a blow at Turkey as the weakest of the enemy allies and to bring Germany's hopes of expansion in the east to nought was sound. 2. The moment chosen was right since the Russian Government was making an urgent request for help for its troops which were being pressed in the Caucasus. 3. The plan might have succeeded, but Kitchener declared that there were not troops enough available to achieve success. 4. The Commission comes to the conclusion that the troops were certainly available.

moral shaking of the whole war. There were mutinies and shootings of whose extent we had no idea at the time.

Painlevé, the War Minister, gave expression in the Chamber to the universal exasperation. France, he said, must not become a pyre devouring itself to illuminate the world.

The dejection is so deep that the French Socialists can venture to respond to a call from St. Petersburg and demand a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine. There are no end of reassuring speeches and every second word is ' America.' People are asking themselves whether the French war spirit would survive the collapse of Nivelle's offensive if it were not upheld by hope in the United States.

In England the ' Eastern ' party thinks the time has come to pass to a general attack against the ' break through ' strategy. The Liberal War Committee succeeds in securing a secret session of the House ; Churchill appears to be the moving spirit. The subject put down for discussion, ' Man Power,' obviously screens a plan to subject the policy of the General Staff to a criticism which cuts to its roots. Even in the Press the General Staff is forced into the defensive. Repington comes to its relief and hints at secret papers dating from this ' tragic ' period, which prove that the French General Staff acted against the advice of the British Staff. Repington cedes an all-important position. He grants his adversaries that the Allies must postpone the great blow until they can strike it with overwhelming superiority,—but he reduces the value of this concession by demanding that England and America shall place this preponderance in the field before the end of the present year. He insists on having 200,000 American recruits on the French front by autumn ; for France cannot wait till next year—she has her last reserves in the field.

From the Liberal Press comes the plain answer that England and America neither can nor ought to satisfy the demand of the General Staff. For this year America must concentrate on the one task that can save the situation—the deblockading of England. With ill-disguised jealousy it is urged that there must be no effort spent on the American

fleet and army, so long as British tonnage is in deadly peril. No more can Britain produce the man power demanded, until she has satisfied the needs of agriculture and shipbuilding and mastered the submarine peril.

On one point there can be no doubt—the peril has not yet been overcome. 'The German figures [of sinkings] are approximately correct,' declares Runciman, a leading member of the Opposition in the House of Commons, on 24thApril, 1917; and he speaks for powerful shipping interests. A note of grave anxiety is struck on all sides,—on the Opposition benches, on the Ministerial bench, above all among the experts who write in the Press. Warnings are issued against a lowering of vitality among the working classes, there is talk of a threat of serious scarcity and complaint is made of the 'indolent' Government, which refuses at five minutes to twelve to take warnings to heart.

But the men who are beating the alarm point at the same time to measures of defence, of whose efficacy they are convinced—and which cannot by any possibility be described as extreme. On the contrary, if we think of the straits under which the economic life of Germany is suffering, they are mild indeed. If the submarine war were really going to bring about Britain's defeat in July, neglect to apply the proposed remedies would be an act of criminal levity to which British history offers no parallel.[1]

[1] On the 25th April, 1917, Lord Devonport announces a 'self denial propaganda' with the help of newspapers, schools and churches. He demands voluntary restriction of the consumption of bread to four pounds a week and of sugar to half a pound a week. The rations of the fighting troops are not cut down, but the Army Command consents to a reduction in the ration of the 70,000-100,000 men employed on office work and similar duties outside England.

The *Westminster Gazette* on the other hand demands *compulsory measures*:

(*a*) Prohibition of the use of cereals in the manufacture of beverages;
(*b*) Universal dilution of flour;
(*c*) Maximum prices for bread;
(*d*) Government control of the manufacture of bread from the grain to the baker's counter, etc.

The *Times* also demands compulsory rationing.

Archibald Hurd, the economist, demands that the Army shall release the thousands of skilled shipbuilders and set them free to speed up the building of ships.

One thing is certain : America cannot throw her material weight into the scales this year ; she can neither deblockade England, nor turn out by autumn the 200,000 men demanded by Repington. The American war machine gets going with an immense to-do, but very, very slowly, for American prestige appears to demand that America must learn, not by the mistakes of the Allies, but by bitter experience of her own. There is, however, no doubt about the seriousness of her war will.[1]

The great support which America is giving the Allies this year is a moral one. The war idealism of the allied peoples has been flickering out. President Wilson succeeds in rekindling it. The Russian revolution has made a tremendous impression on the American people. Wilson takes up Kerenski's watch-word and preaches a crusade for democracy. His message fires Russia, mortally exhausted as she is, to a last effort and throws British labour open once more

[1] The *Manchester Guardian History of the War*, Vol. VI., p. 293, writes on the help of America :

1. Ships and troops were not immediately available, but financial assistance was. On the 11th April a Seven Milliard Dollars Loan is issued ; the money raised is formally handed over to a British and French Mission to be apportioned among the several allies.

2. The German ships interned in American ports whose tonnage equalled the loss of a whole month's sinking by German submarines are placed at the service of the Allies. Further, a Shipping Board is established with power to build, buy, or charter ships. Shipbuilding is to be standardized ; the first deliveries are expected in October.

3. Universal military service is introduced without the intermediate stage of an appeal for volunteers. For foreign service only those men were at first to be used who volunteered, but in case of necessity the President had the power to resort to compulsion.

4. Wilson tries at first to draw all the states which are still neutral by his example into the war against Germany. This succeeds only in some cases and gradually ; but America followed England's methods for the suppression of neutral trade with Germany and was, if possible, still more ruthless in her blockade measures even against the non-combatant population. The blockade was now to be made ' air-tight as well as water-tight.'

5. Congress confers on the President almost unlimited dictatorial power, particularly over the production, distribution and use of foodstuffs ; over railways, shipping and mines ; over raw material and all essential industries ; over the supply of money and war material to the European allies. Even public opinion—although a censorship like the British was rejected by Congress—was drastically controlled by a series of powers conferred on the Postmaster-General.

to the war propaganda, which was beginning to leave it cold.

But the most dangerous effect for us is the fact that the German people are pricking their ears. So long as our efficiency proved superior in victory after victory, the parties of the Left were ready to postpone till after the war the constitutional reform recognized to be necessary. As late as May the Foreign Office would appear to have been under the illusion that peace negotiations were to begin in July. But in the Press pessimism is making its voice heard. The belief is expressed on all sides that England will not knuckle under, as the Navy has promised us. Distrust of the leading men in the Government is taking the form of harsh criticism of our system. The blandishments of the Western democracies thus find a willing ear. The democratic ring seems to be closing tighter and tighter round 'reactionary Germany.' The people starts up in fright as the feeling of isolation grows.

It was obvious to me, that we were faced with a grave crisis. How could we surmount it? Solid grounds for a calm outlook on the situation were not lacking. Our pessimists had no doubt been right in distrusting the promises of the Navy; but they had not taken into account that our enemies might also make disastrous mistakes, for victory and peace had been promised to the allied peoples, as well as to ours, after a last supreme effort. Britain and France, in fact, after the collapse of Nivelle's offensive were not very far from a moral catastrophe.

I saw clearly that in 1917—for we as well as the Allies had lost the prospect of a rapid victory—the war had become a test of nerves. The statesman who would lead his people safely through the crisis was—the best psychologist.

It followed that the Government must at once provide a fresh basis for public confidence; and that could only happen when the 'new orientation' had passed from being a catchword into a reality. At the time the reform of the Prussian franchise appeared to me to be the effective and sufficient remedy.

At the beginning of July I wrote to Haeften :

SALEM, BADEN,
7th July, 1917.

MY DEAR COLONEL VON HAEFTEN,

Our meeting in March gives me, I think, a claim—even if only a modest one—to send you a few observations. You will, of course, treat them like the remarks I made then, as the product not of importunity but of a readiness to help.

The internal situation, influenced as it is by the external, I should sum up as follows : a growing war weariness among all classes, a strong ferment in the poorer classes of the population, especially in the working classes, fostered by the suggestion of the Western and American democracies and their agents, and strongly influenced by events in Russia. The effect of these phenomena has been least noticeable in the South German states and most unpleasant in Prussia. In the big towns and industrial areas scarcity of food plays its own part. A more extensive part is played by the submarine war, for the population had placed great hopes on a rapid and decisive result from this weapon and is now beginning to ask itself whether it has been deceived. Broad masses of our people have been looking forward to the prospect of peace in the autumn of this year. The great Hindenburg offensive on which most of them counted has not taken place and cannot be expected now.

On all sides our enemies are saying to our people : ' You can have peace, when you have democratized yourselves, but no sooner.' This infamous suggestion is believed, and is being made use of, at least by the Social Democrats. It is falling on fruitful soil, because the Government of the Empire enjoys no confidence ; and particularly in Prussia, because the term ' new orientation ' which has gone forth from there has so far been a mere promise.

The consideration—the problem—that faces us is therefore this. Can we continue the war without the risk that serious internal unrest will damage our unity and jeopardize the manufacture of munitions unless we immediately meet the desire of the people for ' democratization ' ? I hate the word ' democratization ' . . . A German word should be invented, to describe the co-operation of the widest classes of the people in the life of the State. That is what we already have in South Germany, and, as we now find, we have no cause to regret it. I think it is time that we had it in Prussia too.

Prussia made the irremediable error of not reforming her

franchise before the war, otherwise many things would be very different.

I had no love for the Easter Message [1] because it was only a promise.

My programme now would be: Give immediate effect to the Easter Message by an act, and, if still possible, a free act of the Kaiser. The first thing to be dealt with is the Prussian franchise, for it is against this that the massed hatred of the majority of the Prussian and German people is directed. I am an opponent of the universal, equal, secret vote, because I look upon it as an insincerity. If it is still possible, and I must unfortunately doubt it, a different franchise should be introduced, a proportional vote or a plural vote not resting on property. The Prussian Government must itself introduce it and fight it through, and that without delay. And what is more, men of liberal views must be included in the Prussian Government and administration. So only, it appears to me, can we face the risks of a fourth winter of war.

It is said that the Supreme Command, and especially General Ludendorff, is hostile. It is said that the Chancellor cannot overcome this opposition. If the Supreme Command is certain of a speedy victory it is right, otherwise it is not. . . .

We were together only a short time, but it was enough to give me complete confidence in your judgment and discretion. And so I venture to ask you whether I can do anything in the matter, and whether you are disposed and able to support me in the course I have indicated.

If it is so, please send me your views in a couple of lines to Karlsruhe. But I know how many claims there are on your time—so please answer me in headlines. I shall understand your meaning: 'war situation,' 'prospects of peace,' 'length of time we can hold out,' 'extent of the ferment and of possible unrest,' 'personal attitude of the Chancellor and Ludendorff to the putting into effect of the Easter Message.'

It is much to ask, I know, but you are entirely free simply to say that there is nothing I can do or ought to do in this matter. That is, if you think that I am going the wrong way about it or that the situation is such that there is no room for my co-operation.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN.

[1] Of 7th April, 1917.

My letter fell on fruitful soil. The reply which I received encouraged me to run up to Berlin. I was not yet aware that the measures which I had recommended must appear groping and hesitating in comparison with the reform which Haeften had been urging for weeks. He thought the time long past when there could be any question of bargaining away this or that part of the equal, universal, and secret franchise. Haeften was guided by no considerations of party politics. The only aim he knew was to strengthen the German resistance and weaken the enemy's. It was to help us with the war that he demanded internal progress.

At the beginning of July a manifesto by ten well-known men of science and letters, mostly of Conservative leanings, had appeared in the Press, declaring that the introduction of the universal equal, secret and direct vote was a need of the hour. The *Vorwaerts* spoke of the manifesto of the 'ten upright men.' Hans Delbrueck was its author.

At the last minute, it appeared, the whole business had nearly come to grief, because several of the signatories had qualms of conscience lest the Supreme Command should be unpleasantly impressed by this public appeal. It was Haeften, who, on his own responsibility and without previous reference to his chief, gave the signatories a guarantee that their manifesto would find an echo at Headquarters.

In fact, his views on what ought to be done went much further. Franchise reform appeared to him necessary, but not enough. He saw only one way to get the German people to put its last ounce of fighting strength into the war, and that was to give the representatives of the people a share in the responsibility of government.

On 8th June Haeften had laid some very serious information before his chief:

'A new winter of war after such disillusionment,' he said, 'could hardly be endured—everyone who has been through the turnip winter says so.' Then he spoke of the necessity of seeking a peace of understanding. Ludendorff asked: 'How is it to come about?' Haeften: 'Only by way of England—England is the key to the situation. Paris is

irreconcilable.' And then he developed the idea of a political offensive against the British home front. Ludendorff listened attentively—by the end he was gripped. Then Haeften declared: 'Such a move implies a reconstruction of the Government. A strong popular movement must be called in to back up the Chancellor.' He urged the formation of a ministry of internal concentration with a wide front from right to left, to include leading personalities in public life, selected for their efficiency regardless of party or creed. Among suitable Members of Parliament he mentioned Count Westarp, Naumann, and Ebert or David. The Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff listened to these proposals with signs of general approval.

Not long afterwards similar suggestions were mooted in the entourage of the Kaiser. There too it was believed that the position of the Government could be strengthened both at home and abroad by the inclusion of Members of Parliament. The Chancellor commissioned Payer to open preliminary discussions. Unfortunately all these excellent precautionary plans never got beyond the initial stage. Our government machine seemed paralyzed. The primal cause—as I learned later—was the alienation between General Ludendorff and Bethmann. They distrusted each other, and even ceased to keep each other informed. It was not so much differences on matters of principle that stood between these two men; it would be truer to say that their personal antagonism biased their point of view. The question of franchise reform and of the inclusion of Members of Parliament in the Government could have been speedily settled were it not that the Supreme Command was afraid of retarding Bethmann's retirement by an understanding with him on these important questions. And they regarded his retirement as a State necessity. General Ludendorff was convinced that only a fighter could master either public opinion or Parliament. And at bottom—his friends thought—the General longed for a Chancellor who could master Ludendorff. Profound differences of temperament lay between Bethmann, the thinker, and Ludendorff, the man of action; neither

understood the language of the other. It was as if that tragic cleavage in the German character which has so often been the cause of our failure in history, had taken bodily shape in these two men. At the beginning of July a compromise seemed within reach, on the understanding that the Chancellor parted with Zimmermann, and especially with Helfferich, whom the Supreme Command at that time regarded as Bethmann's evil spirit. At Solf's suggestion, a heart to heart talk between the two men had been mooted. Bethmann could no longer summon up the necessary confidence and held back.[1]

And so nothing was done, and the storm broke when the Reichstag met and Erzberger arrived from Vienna, fresh and eager for action, but steeped in Viennese pessimism.

On the 11th the Kaiser's July message was published, promising the nation the universal, equal and direct franchise. Bethmann Hollweg resigned on the 13th of July.[2]

I arrived in Berlin the same day. The town was in a perfectly hysterical state of excitement, intensified by the heat of the dog-days.

The most contradictory reports kept reaching me till evening. Some said that Bethmann had been dismissed because he was about to bow his head beneath the Caudine yoke of the peace resolution ; others asserted with no less positiveness that Erzberger had ousted him because he would not accept the resolution.

The truth was that he had to go because the Supreme Command and individual Members of Parliament had made up their minds to bring him down and the Social Democrats no longer supported him. Out of a tangle of rumours I unravelled the following details in the course of the next few days.

On 5th July Scheidemann had commented very sharply

[1] An interesting parallel is the relation between Bismarck and Moltke in the war of 1870-71, cf. Oncken, *Grossherzog Friedrich von Baden und die deutsche Politik von* 1854 *bis* 1871, Vol. II., p. 293 ff., 305 f., 313 ff., 327 f. On Moltke's attitude to politics (' I have only to concern myself with military affairs ') cf. *ibid.* p. 300 ff.

[2] The announcement did not appear till the 14th July, 1917.

on Bethmann's want of decision. Next day, without any warning, came Erzberger's attack in the Main Committee.[1] He challenged the Navy's calculations, declared that he had lost his confidence in Capelle, the Secretary of State for the Navy, and concluded with the demand that the Government should profess the purely defensive character of the war and should disclaim designs of conquest. He gave the freest expression to the general disillusionment over the submarine war and anxiety regarding Austria's power to hold out. Following this sitting inter-party discussions took place, on Naumann's proposal, between representatives of the Centre, Social Democratic and Progressive People's parties. An agreement on home and foreign policy was reached on the basis of the universal, equal, secret franchise for Prussia, no forcible annexations, and no indemnities. The decision to move the peace resolution was taken.

The Supreme Command was infuriated at Bethmann's handling of the crisis. A wish had been voiced in the Inter-party Committee that the two Commanders should be heard, and they had gladly come to Berlin, confident that they could calm down the deputies by their exposition of the war situation, or at least convince them of the necessity of not disturbing the battle operations now proceeding by giving way to nerves. The Generals were only allowed to submit a military report to the Kaiser. The discussion which had been arranged with the party leaders was regarded as interference in politics, and was not permitted. On their return to Spa they heard that the Chancellor was thinking of accepting the peace resolution. They now passed to open hostilities and put the ultimatum before the Kaiser—Bethmann or we.

At first it looked as if the Kaiser would stand up to this threat. He could undoubtedly have induced the Field-Marshal at least to withdraw his resignation and continue to work with Bethmann. The Duke of Brunswick intervened on Bethmann's behalf. He thought it frivolous to proceed

[1] Cf. M. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart and Berlin, 1920, p. 255 ff.; and see further Haussmann, *Schlaglichter*, Frankfurt a-M., 1924, p. 95 ff.

to a change of Chancellor without having the right successor in readiness. Further, Bethmann seemed to him at this juncture to be the man best fitted to keep the Social Democrats on the side of the war and to carry through the new orientation programme without convulsions dangerous to the State.[1]

Then came the Crown Prince's conversations with specially selected representatives of the parliamentary parties.[2] Erzberger and Stresemann regarded a change of Chancellor as absolutely essential and were in a position to appeal to resolutions of their parties. Herr von Payer was all against a leap in the dark. Special care was taken to ascertain from the Social Democrats whether Bethmann was still the man of their confidence. From the reply, given by David, the Crown Prince could only conclude that while the Social Democrats had certainly no wish to overthrow the Chancellor, they did not regard him as indispensable. As was his duty he informed his father ; and so His Majesty parted with his principal adviser, who had his full confidence.

During the next few days I saw a number of people—diplomats, soldiers, and members of parliament. A courtesy visit from Hindenburg in my hotel had drawn public attention to me. Baseless surmises were connected with my name, and I had more visits than I liked. On all hands Bethmann's dismissal was spoken of with relief.

From the first I held a different opinion, and in the light of after events I have come to realize that Bethmann's fall was a national catastrophe. I am not blind to his weaknesses. I know that the fatal decisions which were forced on him against his better judgment will lift up an accusing voice before the bar of history,—a voice which will have less to say of the military resistance which confronted the statesman, than of the will which was not strong enough to break it. Bethmann Hollweg could have gained control of public opinion if the Supreme Command had supported him—and

[1] As a matter of fact Bethmann had brought the franchise reform a step forward shortly before his resignation by the decree of 11th July, 1917.

[2] Cf. the Minutes of these discussions : Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 408 ff.

he could have carried the day against the Supreme Command, if he had had a backing in public opinion. As it was, he had to fight on two fronts. And even this task might have been within his power, if his colleagues had filled him with confidence in the course he was taking. They, however, were often full of scepticism, and his innate *maladie du doute* would then completely paralyze his power of decision. I have a tragic document in my possession—a letter of December of that same year [1]—that bears witness to the loneliness which he must have felt even during his Chancellorship. You can hear his plaint between its lines—' Why had I so few allies ? ' Allies he truly lacked ; allies often enable a man to grow beyond himself. After the resignation of Jagow, Bethmann found a ready understanding for the ethical bent of his foreign policy only among the faithful staff at the Chancellery ; of the Secretaries of State only Solf was sympathetic. Where in public life were the powerful helpers who were a match for the passionate patriots opposing him ? In Parliament it was really only Payer and Haussmann who stood by him. But the sympathy of the Democrats was no compensation for the worry he felt at the hatred of the Right.

I believe to-day that Bethmann's friends are right when they say that a parliamentary majority based on the peace of understanding would have placed in his hands the powerful instrument he so devoutly wished for to assert himself and his programme.

I often asked my visitors what pleased them so much in Bethmann's fall, and the answers were mostly such generalities as ' At last we see land ! ' It became obvious, however, that these gentlemen were still completely at sea regarding the immediate future ; at least many of them had no idea whom they ought to want as Bethmann's successor. The Supreme Command, as I knew, had given no serious thought to the personal question. Individual members of parliament, like Erzberger and Stresemann, were working for Buelow, but the Kaiser's objection to him was then insuper-

[1] See below p. 193 ff.

able. The Inter-party Committee had no candidate of its own. Bethmann's overthrow came about through loose thinking and loose action. With much display of parliamentary ambition and some rattling of the sword we staged the gravest crisis in our internal political history since the foundation of the Empire—never doubting in our heart of hearts that a way out would be found from above.

I made a last hour effort to work up feeling against the peace resolution, although I knew of two vain attempts which had already been made by Haeften and his group. Haeften had entreated David to work for the postponement of the peace resolution. He had given him encouraging assurances as to the attitude of the Supreme Command to the peace of understanding and to the question of parliamentary co-operation—assurances which were not only honestly meant by Haeften, but had a solid basis at Headquarters. He had referred David to the military situation and especially to the severe struggle at Luck. This was no time to be publishing documents of despondency. 'Go ahead, if you must, with your internal crisis, but not a word which will weaken our fighting strength! We must co-operate loyally for a peace in the autumn. If we do not succeed—you still have the peace resolution.'

But Haeften had preached to deaf ears.

Nor could the Social Democrats be brought to see a new way of giving successful publicity to the programme of the peace of understanding without at the same time conveying the impression that Germany was losing heart. 'Force the Chancellor,' they were told, 'to get out the unequivocal declaration on Belgium and have done with it.' This advice met with the astonishing reply: 'If that is done, the most important achievement in Germany's parliamentary history, the newly won majority, will go to pieces; if we are to retain the Centre, we dare not touch the Belgian question.'

I chanced to meet Erzberger in town and asked him: 'Have you drawn up the peace resolution in touch with Rome?' Erzberger: 'No.' 'Then in touch with

Austria ? ' His answer was such that you could take his meaning to be ' Yes.' I said that I had nothing against the content of the resolution, but its form and occasion had been very badly chosen. The answer I received was really devastating : ' What would Your Highness have me do ? With this I shall still get Briey and Longwy at the conference table !'

What particularly astonished me was the fact that Erzberger, like most politicians in Berlin, had no precise idea of the real military situation ; the sources neither of strength nor of weakness in the enemy fronts seemed to be duly considered.

On 14th July came the news that a way out had been found—in Michaelis. So far as I remember, the appointment as Chancellor of the Prussian State Commissary for Food had been recommended in the Press only by the *Taegliche Rundschau*. The annexationist Right offers him its sympathy in the Press from the very first day. The Inter-party Committee—so one reads in the newspapers of the Left—is surprised and suspicious, but is willing to keep quiet if the new man takes his stand on the resolution. The Supreme Command sees a new chance of flooring the resolution.

My experience then was that the powers that be in our politics, when public excitement has reached a certain pitch, cease to be capable of holding to their own considered and proven opinion, and allow themselves to be led by nothing but feelings of annoyance or prestige or spite. ' Sentimental ' politics !

The Supreme Command—thanks to a process of enlightenment which had been going on for months—had been groping towards the goal of a peace of understanding ; and had even gone further and taken up the idea of including Members of Parliament in the Government, for the enhancement of our fighting strength. But annoyance was felt, and rightly felt, at the ' defeatist ' note which was struck in the debates of the Inter-party Committee. The idea that members of parliament should enter the Ministry was

forthwith dropped. How to re-extinguish the influence of the Social Democrats—this was now the only end in view.

At the same time the Majority in the Reichstag had discovered a basic truth ; namely, that we should be helping Germany, and hampering the enemy, in the prosecution of the war if we renounced annexations and once more called the world to witness that we were only defending our country. But this fundamental idea was presently obscured by the wrangle over the formula, which was becoming a question of prestige with the newly-formed majority. A wrangle over the man would have been more to the point. The new Chancellor—whether or not he was prepared to parrot the feeble phrasing of the resolution [1]—should have been a convinced and convincing supporter of the peace of understanding. But immediately after the appointment of Michaelis the augurs began to exchange knowing smiles ; ' just you wait ! the Chancellor's sympathies are with the annexationists and he will let the Majority down.' If this reading was correct, then the Majority must either go into opposition and obstruct the war, or give in, and be made fools of. The enemy would triumph ; he could then put new life into his slogan of ' democracy *versus* autocracy,' which had

[1] The Peace Resolution of 19th July, 1917, runs as follows :

' As on 4th August, 1914, so on the threshold of the fourth year of war, the word of the Speech from the Throne holds good for the German people : " We are not impelled by lust of conquest." For the defence of her freedom and independence, for the integrity of her territorial possessions, Germany took up arms. The Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of the peoples. With such a peace forced acquisitions of territory and political, economic, or financial oppressions are inconsistent. The Reichstag also rejects all schemes which aim at economic barriers and hostility between the peoples after the war. The freedom of the seas must be made secure. Only economic peace will prepare the ground for friendly intercourse between the nations. The Reichstag will actively promote the creation of international law organizations.

So long, however, as the enemy Governments do not accept such a peace, so long as they threaten Germany and her Allies with conquests and oppression, the German nation will stand together like one man, and unshakably hold out and fight until its own and its Allies' right to life and development is secured. The German nation is invincible in its unity. The Reichstag knows that it is at one in this statement with the men who in heroic fight are defending the Fatherland. The imperishable gratitude of the whole people is assured to them.'

been losing strength of late. But to many wise people in Berlin it then appeared that the supreme need of the hour was the discomfiture of Erzberger.

In this chaos of bias and prejudice it seemed to me that I had held fast to certain definite points of view. I had no longer the feeling now that I was groping my way. I was convinced that I saw the right policy. It seemed to me that it was both necessary and possible :

1. to preserve the basic idea of the Reichstag resolution ;
2. to purge it of its undignified and despondent tone and so satisfy soldierly feeling ;
3. to administer a well-deserved paternal reprimand to the leaders of the Reichstag Majority and thereby restore to the Government at least the gesture of leadership ;
4. at the same time to bring the annexationists to their feet in the sharpest opposition and make them serve their special purpose of proving to the enemy that confidence in victory among the class for whom they spoke was unimpaired ;
5. above all to show the world that Army Command, Government and Reichstag were loyally working together, and thus deprive our enemies of their hope of continued internal crises in Germany.

We accordingly drafted a declaration, with which, we thought, the Chancellor should meet the Reichstag.

' Proposed form, submitted on 15th July, 1917, in which the Chancellor might take his stand on the Majority resolution.

Much naturally depends on the form in which the Chancellor adopts the peace resolution. He could say, *e.g.* :

Since its opening day the war Germany is fighting has been for me a war for freedom. He who is fighting for his own rights and freedom must have respect for the rights and the freedom of other peoples. Otherwise his own cause is not sacred to him. To my feeling, accordingly, all those plans which have had no regard to the rights and freedom of other nations, but have aimed at a position of hegemony for Germany, have falsified the motives which made the nation rise as one man. My own principles thus demand of me, that I should take my stand on the basis of your resolution. But I cannot conceal

from you, gentlemen, that I deplore the moment you choose for once more proclaiming to the world the word " understanding." It is true that forces are at work everywhere which are searching for the basis of a lasting peace and devoutly long for a condition of things in which the nations shall once more live side by side in mutual respect. But the tone which we hear from the enemy Governments is a tone of insolence, which appears to indicate that they still hope to be able to dictate peace to a humiliated German people. " First chase your king away," and similar crazy demands have again and again been hurled at us from Britain and America during recent months. When faced with this temper I find it difficult to use the word " understanding." I should therefore like, as I place myself on the basis of your resolution and join with you in proclaiming my war aim to be a peace of understanding, to say to you, gentlemen, and through you in all seriousness to the German people, that the psychological moment for understanding does not yet appear to me to have arrived.

Our enemies want a war to the bitter end, and therefore we also must brace our wills to a war to the bitter end. The demand of the hour is that all national forces be directed to the one goal of a victory in a war of defence, a national rally, etc.'

I thought it well to submit this suggested draft to His Majesty. I wrote him, that ' the battle to be fought on Thursday will decide between victory and defeat.'

The great sitting took place on 19th July. I went to the Reichstag with my two brothers-in-law, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg and the Duke of Brunswick. The Duke was not free from bias, for he was still bitterly annoyed at Bethmann's dismissal and the methods by which it had been brought about. But I did my best to believe in the new man. He was, after all, one of our best organizers and had shown qualities of leadership in his department, while his civil courage was recognized even by his opponents. Finally I thought that his deep and genuine piety would make it easier for him to reject war aims which violated the rights and the honour of other nations.

Then came the famous ' As I understand it ' speech,[1] which made an impression of weakness and dishonesty both

[1] Cf. Georg Michaelis, *Für Staat und Volk*, Berlin, 1922, p. 328.

at home and abroad. The impression was false, but it was inevitable, and so the great political battle was lost.

A trial of strength in Parliament was avoided by a hair's breadth. Perhaps that was not exactly a good thing, for the result was that the majority leaders immediately gave notice of a period of suspicious supervision.

On all sides there was disappointment, resignation, disillusionment. Nothing was so significant of the prevailing state of mind as the universal 'quest of the successor,' which began immediately after Michaelis' speech. I talked with many men of diverse political leanings and came across nobody who believed that Michaelis' Ministry could last. I was distressed and startled by the question, which cropped up here and there: 'Would I accept the office of Chancellor?' I turned such questions away with a laugh—but I cannot deny that they threw me into a state of excitement which surprised me.

I think I can explain this. I saw clearly that on our present aimless course we were drifting helplessly into a new winter campaign. In this case we should lose the masses, and then—even in Germany—an energetic prosecution of the war was no longer possible.

Must we face this fourth winter of war? The Supreme Command has no wish for the fourth winter, any more than the Reichstag. The majority of the British people, too, if faced with the choice between victory with America's help and an honourable peace won by their own efforts this year, would choose peace. But we dare not wait until—say in a few months—a new Government crisis in Germany brings a happy solution. The nearer and the more real American help appears, the stronger grows Lloyd George's position.

The information I received convinced me that we both must and could break the British war will before the winter. Our situation at home and abroad was indeed in a bad way, but it needed only certain definite political steps to bring about a recovery. And I had to admit to myself that birth and position perhaps made it easier for me than for others to perform the act of healing.

1. We must try the effect of palatable war aims on the people of Britain, as soon and with as much publicity as possible—above all, of the declaration on Belgium.

2. But we must drop all courtship of peace; it is undignified; it is getting on the soldiers' nerves, and with good reason.

3. We must carry out the promised franchise reform with all speed, and in addition include Members of Parliament in the Government—especially Social Democrats, who must take a responsible hand in the enhancement of our military strength.

I made use of these days to find out, in conversation with people of the most diverse political complexion, what sort of echo such a programme could count on. The result was such as to lay upon me a responsibility which I had never sought. I was overwhelmed to see the power of conviction which lay in these simple ideas. Haeften was encouraging; the Supreme Command, he thought, could be won over, if only one went about the business tactfully and spared soldierly feeling. Politicians of the Left seemed greatly relieved at the prospect of the gulf between the Majority and Ludendorff being bridged.

A conversation I had with David was very significant.

David is by nature a scholar, wholly free from the narrow-mindedness of the tied party man. He had seen at an early stage how important it was for the attainment of an honourable peace, that we should no longer sit still under the charges made against us of having wilfully brought about the war. He had just been putting up a brave fight for Germany's good name at the Stockholm Conference.[1]

I found it most instructive to hear this man talk. No suspicion here of a defective sense of patriotism. He

[1] Cf. E. H. R. David, *Wer traegt die Schuld am Kriege* (Reden, gehalten vor dem hollaendisch-skandinavischen Friedenskomitee in Stockholm, 1917), Berlin, 1917. Judged by the state of German research at the time it is a good and clearly-written book. David and his party friends have been called 'Kaiser-Socialists' and have had to put up with the nastiest attacks not only from foreign comrades who never shrank for their part from agitation for the Entente war but also from the German Independents. In the first few days after the Revolution his friends feared for his life.

demanded firstly internal reforms; secondly, a conspicuous and convincing effort to reach a peace of understanding. The alternative was to turn machine-guns on our own people and lose the war.

Friedrich Naumann made a deep impression on me; even in conversation one could not resist the magic charm of his language. For him absolute 'soundness' on all questions of security and humanity was axiomatic. His agreement with my views was emphatic.

Diplomats, Ministers of Conservative leaning, and big business men assured me of their agreement.

I had the pleasure of spending an evening in Hans Delbrueck's house. Harnack, Meinecke and Troeltsch, the latter well-known to me since his Heidelberg days, were present, and I think, also Schiffer. Hans Delbrueck was clearly the leading spirit. It was not only his quick eye for the real and his bold grasp on the essential, that made him stand out in this select company. In every glance and word there shone a love for Germany that I can only describe as 'tender.' Everyone present, to be sure, was a devoted patriot; but it seemed to me that Hans Delbrueck cared for Germany in a way all his own—as if there could be no other refuge for him, either in the happiness of his own family, or in the science to which he was devoted, if fate and infatuation should plunge his Fatherland into ruin.

And that this would happen, almost all of those present felt sure. After the way in which the Reichstag crisis had been handled, they had been convinced that the Supreme Command and public opinion were unteachable. But when I, convinced of the soundness of Haeften's judgment, assured them that the Supreme Command could very well be won over to the peace of understanding if only a guarantee were given that the moral stamina of the nation would be maintained for the maximum military effort, there was unanimous agreement that the road to a reasonable policy would lie open as soon as the annexationists ceased to have a support in the Supreme Command. I left with the certainty that these men would not hesitate

at the right moment to throw their weight into the scale of public opinion.

I was able to confine most of my conversations to matters of policy and keep clear of the personal question. Then I received a letter from a political friend who argued powerfully that our change of system could restore our international position only if the new programme were proclaimed by a new man and a man whose profession of belief in the peace of understanding could not be regarded as a sign of weakness or of dishonesty.

Two gigantic obstacles, the letter said, stood between us and peace :

1. ' The belief of the enemy peoples that Germany thinks she can terrorize the world ; and the determination that *this* Germany shall not win the war.

If Prince Max could become head of the Government, there would be a man at the helm who has proved his charity in action while the enemy were content with pious protestations.

2. The belief that Germany's war aims are irreconcilable with the rights of other peoples.

Belief in the peace of understanding can only be effectively professed by a man who has no need to say " Father, I have sinned ! " '

The letter ended :

' Men of like opinion are everywhere trying to get into touch. But they often fail to find each other, and thus succumb to a well-organized combination of opponents. The candidature of Prince Max would be a signal rallying like to like.'

This letter startled me ; but I was still more startled by news of how some leading members of parliament—and men not given to excitement—were feeling. These men, it appeared, were simply awaiting the development of events with gloomy fatalism. A remark made by Conrad Haussmann to one of my acquaintances was significant of the prevailing resignation.

' Since Bethmann's fall and Michaelis' appointment there

is nothing for it but sit helpless and wait. Defeat will bring enlightenment, and then it will be of no avail.' 'There is a man,' was the reply, 'who can break through this vicious circle—for he would be listened to by the Supreme Command and the Kaiser; and his programme is to carry out the franchise reform and clear up the Belgian question.' Then Haussmann sprang up and quoted from a Swabian love poem: 'Show me the man and I'll marry him!' And then he added very seriously: 'The time has come when all the people who are working to stave off catastrophe ought to know of each other.'

On receiving this information I agreed to have a talk with Haussmann, and discuss the situation frankly. Haussmann asked to be allowed to bring his friend Payer, the leader of his party.

Our conversation was roughly as follows.

I began with a brief exposition of the preliminary conditions for a peace, if possible in the autumn; I made no secret of my opinion that the resolution was premature, and that its *mise en scène* had been faulty. The annexationists should have attacked more sharply, and then they could have been more sharply repulsed. What was needed in dealing with them was not repression, but aggression. In that respect Bethmann, too, had been found wanting. As for Michaelis himself, I had no objection to him.

As the conversation proceeded, Payer asked me point blank whether I should be ready in a given case to become Chancellor. I replied that it would not have occurred to me personally that I should hold such an office. If I were ever to entertain the idea I must be convinced that there was no more suitable holder. It was by accident and by no merit of mine that some personal qualities and conditions which were welcome at the moment happened to coincide in my case.

But there were also strong objections: I was no orator, and above all, even if I could trust myself to speak from paper, no debater. Further, as heir apparent to a throne, it was a risk for me to enter the party struggle.

Payer was kind enough to reply that there had been nothing very remarkable in the oratorical powers of the Chancellors to whom he had listened. And further, ' a man grows with his aims.' Haussmann added some aimiable words and pointed out that I should always have Members of Parliament and Secretaries of State to support me in carrying my programme. It was essential, and the main thing, that I should rely openly on the Majority parties and thus make parliamentary government a reality. As to my future position in Baden, I need have no anxiety ; Baden—apart from the enclave of North-German professors in Freiburg—here I could not help smiling—had no Conservatives. The National Liberals of Baden would follow Rebmann, and the Centre, Fehrenbach, in supporting me ; the Social Democrats, trained as they were by Franck and Kolb, would follow suit as certainly as would his own Baden party associates ; that he would guarantee. And so, if I followed the call of the hour and of the interest of the Reich and forged a new German policy, I would have all the parties in Baden on my side and be lifted above the party struggle. That the federal principle would not suffer, my status as a Badener and heir to the Baden throne would be the guarantee.

I next mentioned my political scruples : the rift between people and Crown must be closed in the interest of both, and that would only be made possible by honest admission of the people's representatives to the business of government. But I was a monarchist not only by birth but also by conviction, and must ask the question : Would all the parties on whose support I must rely honestly accept my position ? The Social Democrats always made reservations, even if only tacitly, on this point.

Turning to Payer I said : ' In your speech of yesterday I liked especially the phrase " German parliamentarism." I am against the uncritical adoption of Western parliamentarism. The Government of the Reich should, of course, include members of parliament, but should not be confined to members of parliament. We need efficient men from

among the permanent officials and from the liberal professions in high office. As regards the main lines of policy there must, of course, be agreement between the Secretaries of State. But the leadership of the Chancellor must, under all circumstances, be upheld.'

Payer agreed : it would fill him, he said, with dismay, if we parliamentarized ourselves on the Western model ; that would be done at the expense of efficiency and expert knowledge.[1]

I felt after this conversation that it was high time to leave Berlin. My more intimate associates appeared to be possessed by a fixed idea that my Chancellorship was the only salvation. In such circumstances perpetual discussion of the personal question could not be avoided, and I hated above all things the idea of approaching even the fringes of intrigue. Over-zealous friends appeared to me not to have sufficient grasp of this point. Michaelis' Ministry must be given its chance. I actually suspected that certain valuable pieces of information were not being brought to the notice of the Government, because they were being held up for ' the successor.' I therefore seized the opportunity before my departure to hand on an important communication—I think it was to His Majesty.

By a secret route—which was so carefully disguised that I cannot disclose it even now—it was reported to me that an influential personality, an out and out Belgian patriot, had put the following expression of opinion into definite form for transmission to Germany :

1. Belgium began the war for private reasons and it should, in our opinion, be possible to conclude it for private reasons.

2. After an authentic declaration by the German Government recognizing Belgium's independence and integrity, the movement among the Belgian public for dissociation from the war aims of the Entente would be very strong.

[1] I reproduce this conversation from my own recollection of it and have also used notes composed by Haussmann in July 1917 and subsequently placed by him at my disposal.

(This ' Belgian patriot ' had good means of access to Le Havre.)

3. There could, of course, be no question of Belgium concluding a separate peace, only of an effective initiative in bringing about an all-round peace.

My advice was first of all to give the King of Belgium the desired declaration on Belgium confidentially through diplomatic channels and then to give the ' Belgian patriot ' simultaneous notice of this step, so that he might at least be in a position to put public pressure on Le Havre in case no initiative in favour of peace followed from that quarter.

I left Berlin with the request, which I committed to writing, that there should be no canvassing, even of the most discreet character, for my candidature.

I had occasion a few days later to repeat this warning in a stronger form. The Grand Duke of Baden had heard that the possibility of my becoming Chancellor had been widely canvassed and entered his *caveat* against the heir to the throne of Baden being invested with the Chancellorship. I thoroughly understood his point of view.

CHAPTER VII

THE HUNDRED DAYS OF MICHAELIS

It now remained to rally all our optimism behind the hope that Michaelis, in spite of evil prophecies, would give proof of the necessary insight and energy. I put my trust in Herr von Kuehlmann, who had been designated chief adviser to the Chancellor. The Baghdad Agreement was rightly regarded as one of the most brilliant diplomatic achievements of the pre-war period. Tenacity of will had just succeeded in bringing it to completion when the war broke out. Kuehlmann was the diplomat to whom the chief credit for this far-reaching work of understanding was ascribed. Much depended on how the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would get on with the Supreme Command.

Soon after my departure I was sorry to notice that the feeling of the Supreme Command was again beginning to harden against the Social Democrats.

Haeften wrote me on 31st July :

> ' . . . I fear that Herr M[ichaelis] can scarcely succeed in the important—perhaps at present the all-important—task of eliminating the Social Democratic Party as a determining factor in our internal and external politics. And what then ? Then we have to face a new internal crisis, whose solution in my opinion can certainly not be left to Parliament. It is therefore the duty of the Crown by timely decisions of a precautionary character to prevent the outbreak of such a crisis.
>
> The repetition of such events as took place in the first half of July must at all costs be prevented in the interest of the authority of the state. Otherwise we should be faced with gradual internal dissolution ! . . . '

The ' Hundred Days of Michaelis ' are among those epochs of the war on which one must look back with bitter-

ness. The year 1916—'dawdled away in blood'—was not being made good. In the summer and autumn of 1917 political opportunities at home and abroad, opportunities never to recur, were being thrown away.

Among the charges made against the Michaelis period the Papal Note always takes the first place.

True, it is astounding that Germany's official reply to the Pope's solemn inquiry of the 1st August was delivered after an interval of more than six weeks and then did not include the requested declaration on Belgium. And it is even more incomprehensible that the confidential letter of the Nuncio Pacelli of 30th August, which pleaded once more, and almost with fervour, for a declaration on the restoration of Belgium, was likewise answered only after a month had elapsed, and again amounted to a refusal.[1] But the controversy which has recently become so heated proceeds on false assumptions,[2] apportions blame where there is none, and spares where censure is deserved. I join issue especially with three assertions, which are always being repeated :

1. Michaelis is said to have wrecked the peace move of the Pope in deference to the Supreme Command.

As against this it can be shown :

(*a*) In the later summer and autumn of 1917, when General Ludendorff wished to have done with the war, full authority from the Supreme Command, or at least its tacit consent, could have been obtained for the public and unrestricted declaration on Belgium.[3]

(*b*) The Government of the time would in any case not have been in a position to push the complaisance of the Supreme Command to its furthest limits ; for it always contemplated making a purely *diplomatic* use of the Belgian declaration. The 'morale' of the British people could, however, only be got at by a *public* declaration on Belgium ;

[1] Cf. Bredt, 'Der Deutsche Reichstag im Weltkriege,' *Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, 1926, Vol. VIII., Chapter 'Die Papstnote.'

[2] Cf. Friedrich Ritter von Lama, *Der vereitelte Friede*, Augsburg, 1926.

[3] Cf. Haeften's statements before the Investigation Commission on 2nd and 3rd March, 1922, *Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Vol. III., 1925, p. 266 ff.

and thus Michaelis was not in a position to bring the most effective argument into play in his negotiations with the soldiers. That argument would have run : 'Even if the declaration fails to bring us peace, it will lighten Germany's military task.'

(*c*) The official adviser of the Chancellor, the responsible director of our foreign policy, Herr v. Kuehlmann, objected fundamentally and obstinately to the public declaration on Belgium because he did not wish to give away his best pawn before the peace negotiations.

(*d*) Kuehlmann succeeded on 10th September in bringing the representatives of the Majority Parties so effectively to heel that they consented to the dispatch of the empty note to the Pope.

(*e*) In his computation of the chances of peace Kuehlmann considered only the attitude of official England ; he thought that he could acquire certainty regarding this attitude through the channels he himself controlled ; and in case his inquiries took a favourable turn, he had received full authority from the Kaiser and the Chancellor to promise unrestricted restoration of Belgian sovereignty and integrity.

Kuehlmann underestimated the degree to which the British Government depends on public opinion and likewise our power to influence this public opinion.

(*f*) The treatment of the Papal Note was due to this contempt for every channel leading straight to the British people over the heads of the diplomats, far more than to the restraining influence of the Supreme Command and of the Chancellor.

2. It is asserted that what we had before us was a serious peace-feeler from Britain. This I do not believe. I base my dissent on precise evidence regarding the situation in Britain to which I had access at the time.

There is no doubt that in July and August one or other of Lloyd George's colleagues had had an attack of weakness, which made him accessible to promptings of reason.[1] It may

[1] See the *Observer* (beginning of August).

be that de Salis' démarche [1] owed its origin to some such fit of depression on Balfour's part, although the reference which it contains to the note on war aims which the Entente addressed to Wilson [2] really does not point in this direction. However that may be it is my opinion that common sense in England had already vanished before the earliest date on which our declaration on Belgium could have come to hand.

3. It is asserted that the Papal Note gave us our best opportunity to drop our great bomb on the British public. I believe that we had had a still more favourable opportunity *when on 27th July, Asquith, the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, had addressed a direct question to Michaelis, whether he was ready to restore Belgium.*

The blunders of Michaelis' Government in home politics have been forgotten ; in truth they are the heavier. I would go so far as to assert that our constitutional system is still suffering from certain precedents set up in that period.

There was much rejoicing in reactionary circles in those days over the fact that the Reichstag Majority had been pre-

[1] The dispatch of 21st August, 1917, on the preliminary conditions of any peace discussion which the British Ambassador at the Vatican, Count de Salis, handed to the Cardinal Secretary of State ran as follows :

'We have not yet had an opportunity of discussing His Holiness' Note with our Allies, and are not in a position to furnish a reply to the proposals of His Holiness in respect to the conditions capable of ensuring a lasting peace. In our opinion, no approximation to this goal is to be expected, until the Central Powers and their Allies have made an official statement regarding the aims with which they are prosecuting the war, and also regarding the restorations and indemnifications which they are prepared to effect and the means by which the world may be safeguarded in future against a recurrence of the horrors from which it is now suffering. Not even as regards Belgium—and in her case those Powers have themselves admitted that they were in the wrong—have we ever received any intimation of a definite statement that they intended to restore Belgium's complete independence and to make good the damages which they have inflicted upon her. Your Eminence has doubtless not overlooked the declarations made by the Allies in response to the Note of President Wilson. Neither from Austria nor from Germany has any corresponding declaration been forthcoming. Any attempt to bring about an agreement between the belligerent parties would appear to be fruitless until we are clearly cognizant of the points in respect to which their views diverge.'

This dispatch was forwarded by Pacelli on 30th August to the Chancellor with hopeful comments.

[2] Of the 10th January, 1917.

sented with a Chancellor who was the man not of their confidence, but of their distrust. But this very relation of distrust gave rise to claims to power on the part of Parliament such as at that time were tolerated in no democratic country. Before long a supervisory body was set up, the so-called Committee of Seven or of ' Public Welfare,' which claimed to inspect Government documents before they were published. At first it was only diplomatic notes ; but presently the desire for a preliminary censorship of the Chancellor's speeches cropped up. Here we have unwarranted interference of legislature with executive in its worst imaginable form. The inevitable result is the paralyzing of the Government for rapid action, even in international crises, when presence of mind and prompt execution are as necessary as they are on the battlefield.

Parliament grew so fond of this habit of suspicious supervision that it was maintained when in October 1918 and later men who possessed the confidence of the Majority were called to the head of the Government. The Reichstag was here obeying that evil genius of the German character, its deep-seated hatred of willing subordination, which stands in such crying contrast to the willingness with which it accepts an enforced subordination.

And so German parliamentary life gradually lost the idea of leadership.

I do not believe that this idea can be reinstated if the custom crystallizes of appointing to the Chancellorship only the delegate of a party, whom his delegating authority can recall at any time.

It is to Max Weber that we owe the great political achievement of the post-revolution period. In alliance with Simons and in opposition to the admirers of the French system he carried the principle that the President of the Reich must be elected not by the Reichstag but by the people. The head of the German Republic is free, as the Kaiser used to be, to appoint a Chancellor from among the officials, from the liberal professions or from the Reichstag, and entrust him with the formation of a Government ; in his decision personal

qualification is thus allowed to weigh as heavily as political agreement with the Majority. Suppose then that for some trivial cause, especially during the course of important foreign negotiations, the confidence of the Majority is withdrawn from the Chancellor, while he still retains the confidence of the head of the State. He can then, with the latter's approval, appeal to the people against the parties, who would have as little hold over him as over the popularly elected President who has appointed him. Only by this method, clearly traced out in the constitution, can a born leader ever succeed in creating a new party to clear away soulless and decrepit parliamentary groups, particularly on occasions when the groups from tactical considerations are betraying principles which the public opinion of the nation is determined to uphold.

I am not advocating the tyranny of a minority—to that I am fundamentally opposed. The dictatorship of the proletariat as well as that of Fascism is foreign to the nature of the German people. With me it is an article of faith that a constitutional State must as a matter of principle grant the individual citizen freedom to uphold his conviction without imperilling his life or his livelihood. And if he succeeds—he and his political associates—in persuading the majority that his programme is the right one, then that programme ought to be translated into Government action.

I believe further that the terrorism which is inseparably and logically bound up with a minority Government corrupts a nation's most precious possession, the human nature of its citizens. Not of the few who sacrifice life for their convictions, but of the many who bow their heads and for the sake of profit submit to disgrace and wrong.

I maintain therefore that Parliament must have the power to overthrow a Chancellor who no longer possesses the confidence of the Majority, just as his nomination must be confirmed by the confidence of the Majority; but the initiative in the choice of a leader should rest with an authority which stands above party, not with the parties. For parties in Germany find it hard enough to give loyal support to

leaders who have risen from their own ranks; and behind them there often stand vested interests which make an unbiased judgment impossible.

To my mind there is no contradiction between aristocracy and democracy. The majority principle to my mind exercises a wholesome constraint on the aristocrat who claims to be fitted for leadership by birth or education or his own merits, forcing him to find the way of approach to his fellow-citizens, from whose ' crowd profane ' it has always been the chief temptation of the elect to keep aloof. The aristocracy is the salt wherewith the democracy shall be salted.[1] It is important, moreover, in its own interest to free the nobility of intellect or birth from the unnerving sense of privilege.

I have deviated from the plan of my book. I have made this digression into constitutional questions because I cannot shut my eyes to an approaching danger. Aversion to the parliamentary system which is being evolved in Germany in imitation of half-understood Western institutions may one day result in political rashness turning to experiments in Fascism. A craving for leadership has taken deep root among the nations since the great deeds of the war. If German democracy does not succeed in overcoming ' Government by the Many ' and the splitting up of responsibility, it is lost.

In July 1917 the Kaiser by right of constitution and custom had the power to call to the head of the Government the man he considered best qualified. Had his choice fallen on a convinced advocate of franchise reform and of no annexations, the Reichstag Majority would have accepted the lead of such a Chancellor without harassing him with a system of suspicious supervision.

Such a solution would neither have been a passing war measure, nor a transition to parliamentary domination,

[1] Gustav Steffens, *Das Problem der Demokratie*, 1912, p. 101 : ' An aristocracy which strikes its roots deep is the salt of a vital democracy.' (Quoted from R. Thoma, *Der Begriff der modernen Demokratie in seinem Verhaeltnis zum Staatsbegriff, Erinnerungsgabe fur Max Weber : Die Hauptprobleme der Soziologie*, Munich, 1923, Vol. I., p. 41. This treatise is an illuminating analysis of the basic idea of democracy.)

but an organic development of Bismarck's constitutional structure.

I had retired to Salem for a few weeks of quiet and reflection ; my correspondence on the home and foreign situation, however, continued to be lively.[1]

And so I am in a position to reconstruct the history of this tragic period of wasted opportunities from contemporary documents. I will intersperse it with only a few personal reminiscences.

I. The Effect of the Peace Resolution Abroad

Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften sent a representative to the Hague for a few weeks to acquire first-hand information regarding the effect in foreign countries of proceedings in Germany and to get into touch with neutral sources of information.

The first reports (29th July, 1917, and the following days) included the following information :

> ' It is difficult to form an idea of the breathless tension with which neutrals and Entente people here have followed the crisis in Germany. Until the appointment of Michaelis, and even in many cases until his speech, the hopes of the well-disposed rose high. X. [an American, then at the Hague] stayed up till two o'clock in the morning, just to read the Wolff dispatches. Immediately before the (provisional) conclusion of the crisis he summarized his view as follows :
>
> " If a Chancellor now appears who represents the standpoint of the Majority against the opposition of the Pan-Germans then our die-hards have been struck the heaviest blow they have yet had."
>
> On Friday morning, the day after the Chancellor's speech, the following conversation took place :
>
> The American : " Well, what do you think of the new man ? "

[1] Herr v. Haeften had counted on the co-operation of men of all parties and also of men without political ties to help him in carrying out his task of strengthening the moral power of resistance of the home population. I had also promised my help, but naturally only on condition that I was kept exactly informed on the political situation at home and abroad. This was regularly done.

Answer : " A capital man, only he can't speak."

The American : " That's bad, for in that case he is not a capital man. To-day words are everything."

Then he continued : " If only the crisis had taken a different course ! If the Germans had only played the last act a shade better, we'd have been a long way nearer peace."

He went on roughly as follows : " What good am I doing poking about in German newspapers for evidence that Michaelis' Ministry is an improvement from the point of view of German freedom and the promise of a just peace—I can't convince anybody of that. My Government is guided by public opinion. Now try to imagine how the new ministry appears to the public opinion of the United States :

1. Bethmann promises the universal equal franchise ;
2. Bethmann wants to take his stand on the Majority resolution ;
3. Along come Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and the Crown Prince arrives in Berlin ;
4. The National Liberals, and with them the whole Pan-German Press, demand Bethmann's overthrow ; the Democratic Party take up the cudgels for Bethmann ;
5. Down goes Bethmann, and without preliminary sounding of the Majority Parties in comes the new man Michaelis, who is tempestuously greeted by the Pan-Germans as *their* man." '

The report on Britain had a more hopeful tone :

In spite of the unfortunate form of our peace resolution the British Opposition seized upon it—it almost looks as if they were glad of a pretext—so strong was the popular feeling at that time in favour of a peace of understanding. The reasons for this were known to us :

1. People looked forward to Haig's coming offensive with misgiving and distrust.

2. It was now known that the armed support of America would begin to be effective at the earliest in the spring of 1918, and people hated being asked to look for comfort in anything which only came into play after a fourth winter of war.

3. Lloyd George has been trying to overcome the working men's aversion to the war by repeated concessions at the cost

of property. And at once a current of Conservative opinion in favour of a timely peace is clearly recognizable. Repeated warnings are uttered against the 'red peace' to which a war foolishly prolonged must lead. Fear of the 'democratic rabble' is expressed without any disguise. The idea is even mooted in the Press that a Balfour-Lansdowne Ministry of Conservative tendency should be formed, which would rely on Asquith's support and shelve Lloyd George or get rid of him altogether.

On 26th July Asquith makes his bold peace sally in the House of Commons. British sources of information maintain that he is acting in concert with Balfour.

According to the *Manchester Guardian* of 27th July, 1917, this political event came about as follows :

> 'Reviewing the history of recent events in Berlin, the ex-Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) came to the uncompromising conclusion that the sequel represented victory for the military chiefs, that it was to those very victors that the new Chancellor owed his appointment, and that counsels of moderation had given way to the counsels of the extremists.
>
> When Asquith then touched upon the question of Belgium, Snowden interrupted him at this interesting point with the following words :
>
> *" Why not put the question to Germany? " With raised voice and gathering emphasis Mr. Asquith retorted that that was precisely what he was doing. " I ask it now," he reiterated amid cheers, " I should like to know the German Chancellor's answer to the question. I put it to him now, as far as I am able to do so."* '

II. Attempts to have an Answer given to Asquith's Question

On 8th August Hahn visited me on the Bodensee to tell me the news from the Hague.

Rosen, our ambassador, he told me, sees in Asquith's question a unique opportunity to bring us a long step nearer peace. He had immediately sent two dispatches to the Chancellor and urgently begged him to give Asquith the official reply which he asked for. He had even gone further and tried to get into touch with official England through

Heemskerk, the Dutch ex-premier, if possible to obtain a guarantee through him that a German declaration on Belgium would find an echo with the British Government. Rosen had gone so far as to say that if a reassuring reply came and Michaelis continued to be silent on Belgium, he—Rosen—had made up his mind to resign.

I shared my informant's opinion that Rosen would never obtain the desired guarantee of an echo. Official England was represented by Lloyd George and not by Asquith.

As to what ought now to be done on the German side there were two opinions at the Hague. Some thought with Rosen that Michaelis ought to reply immediately. Thus the Dutch pacifists had appealed in a strongly-worded telegram to the leaders of the Reichstag Majority to force out the declaration on Belgium at once : [1]

> ' . . . German Majority can bring cause of peace long step forward if they secure unequivocal answer to Asquith's questions respecting Belgium. Contrast between speeches of Asquith and Bonar Law subject of lively discussion here on all sides. Bonar Law and Lloyd George have represented Chancellor's speech to their peoples as adhesion to annexation. Asquith doubts this interpretation and asks Chancellor in plain language what attitude he takes regarding Belgium. Asquith here for first time places himself in opposition to present Government on question of foreign policy. If Asquith's question remains unanswered the conflct of opinion fades out ; but its intensification is inevitable if unequivocal answer given. Excellent opportunity now available to detach Asquith and what stands behind him from present Ministry. . . . Please communicate this telegram to David and Fehrenbach.' [2]

Dr. Johannes Lepsius, who had been closely studying the problem of peace at the Hague for a year, gave the opposite advice. He quoted the *Westminster Gazette* as having

[1] This telegram dates from the beginning of August and was addressed to Conrad Haussman.

[2] On the 15th August, 1917, Herr de Jong van Beek en Donk of the ' Anti-Oorlog-Raad ' transmitted the telegraphic reply which he had received from a well-known Englishman : ' Unrestricted declaration by Chancellor guaranteeing complete Belgian freedom first essential step to peace. If taken, it would undoubtedly alter international situation.'

declared that a peace of reconciliation implied a change of system in Germany and that the problem would have been immensely simplified if the new order really reflected a humane spirit. I reproduce the opinion then reported orally in the words of a letter which reached me about a week later :

'If the new ordering of Germany on a basis of freedom is to make a really telling impression on the mind of the world, an essential condition is that an end must be made, with a striking gesture, of the inert and feeble advocacy which it has so far enjoyed. If, for example, a new Chancellor or a new Secretary of State were now to make the inevitable concessions haltingly and under compulsion, the effect would be just the reverse of what is needed; it would merely strengthen the impression of weakness and dishonesty. For the same reason we must avoid shelving the new system till October, when it would be carried under parliamentary pressure.

The world will give neither attention nor credence to Germany until it sees new men with a new spirit. A statesman of impressive personality, acting with the Reichstag Majority (including the Social Democrats) in a co-operation which is visibly honest and cordial, must take over the leadership; and he must be upheld by the free initiative of the Crown, itself inspired by the great ethical conception of a kingship based on the will of the people. If the new order is not brought about by such joint effort of the leading national forces, but forced on the nation from below, hopes will be awakened in the enemies of the German Empire of a third and a fourth crisis and ultimately of Russian anarchy. To avert this it must be made clear to all that the change of system has been effected in complete unanimity between the Crown and the people, including the working masses, so that all hope of our enemies in an internal split in Germany may be finally removed.

The happy solution would be that a man of high position and liberal mind should become head of the Government—a man whose humane spirit is known to the world—a man of weight and large experience of the world, who would represent the German Empire with distinction and dignity in the great hour of the peace negotiations.

Michaelis is not the man from whom an answer to Asquith would be the decisive act. He can to-day do his country a greater service than he could do by making the declaration on Belgium; he can go.'

While this information was being given me, a telegram came in from Headquarters, instructing Hahn to come at once to Kreuznach with the documents from the Hague. He was told to be there next morning at eight o'clock so that Haeften might hear his report before Ludendorff saw Kuehlmann and Michaelis in the forenoon.

As we parted I gave him a message to Haeften : ' Tell Haeften that the better is the enemy of the good ; tell them for Heaven's sake not to wait for a Chancellor the shape of whose nose the Entente likes better, but out with the declaration on Belgium ! '

Haeften had the information from the Hague in time, but it was only in the afternoon, after the conference with the Chancellor and Kuehlmann was over, that he had an opportunity of presenting a detailed report to Ludendorff.

When he left Kreuznach that evening he had the feeling that he had succeeded as far as was humanly possible. In the train to Berlin he summed up the result of his conversation as follows : There is no doubt that Ludendorff does not want a fourth winter of war. It will be hard for the General to part with Liège, but he is at last convinced that only an unqualified declaration on the liberation of Belgium would have the desired effect. Ludendorff intended to speak to the Chancellor in this sense, if possible to-day.[1] He stands by Michaelis, whom he regards as a leader. He is impressed by Michaelis because Michaelis once contradicted him with spirit.

III. The Question whether Michaelis should be supported or overthrown

In the middle of August the Papal Peace Note was published. It treated the Belgian question as the central problem :

> ' Consequently on the part of Germany, there must be the complete evacuation of Belgium, with a guarantee of her full political, military and economic independence towards all powers whatsoever.'

[1] Statement by Haeften before the Second Commission of Investigation on 2nd March, 1922.

I hear that the newly-formed Committee of Seven insists on having the Government's reply read to them. Will the Committee respond to the suggestion from the Hague and demand and enforce the liquidation of the Belgian question? I learn that among the members of the Centre the main stress is being laid on a renewed acceptance of the peace resolution, if possible in a more detailed form.

In the middle of August I received the following pessimistic report on the position of Michaelis' Ministry :

> ' The present calm in the internal situation is misleading. It is explained by the nervous exhaustion of the Reichstag Majority, which has taken refuge in the recess. Even so calm and mild an observer of the situation as Payer said to me in Stuttgart the day before yesterday : " Well, there will be a row in the autumn."
>
> Haussmann was much more definite. He regarded a crisis as absolutely inevitable and only hoped as a patriot that the statesmanship of the Crown might succeed in forestalling this crisis.
>
> The question whether Michaelis' Ministry can be a final solution is easily answered if we realize the task which it has to accomplish. The main task of German policy at the present moment is in my opinion to destroy the enemy morale and strengthen the German morale for the " finish." I do not hesitate for a moment to say that Michaelis' Ministry appears to me to have so far strengthened the enemy morale and weakened the German. That Lloyd George dares at this time of day to flout the working masses of England by refusing their leaders passports is a fact of enormous symptomatic significance. He has succeeded in planting the suggestion in England that the new ministry in Germany is less moderate in its war aims than the old, is less in earnest with the new orientation, and so on. The same suggestion is eating its way further and further into the German masses.'

With this I disagreed, and I expressed my opinion in the following letter :

> ' 18*th August*, 1917.
>
> . . . My view is that Michaelis' Ministry should be kept in being as long as possible, and I think that the middle parties should support it by every means in their power ; the bankruptcy of the democratic idea in the Western countries luckily

offers a chance. Right as you no doubt are in your reference to the fact that Lloyd George has found it possible to refuse the Labour Party their passports, he has in my opinion made a very big mistake and won a Pyrrhic victory which will bring a long revenge. . . . The insincerity of the democratic watchword is palpable, and herein lies the possibility of a healing process not unfavourable to Germany. Michaelis and the Press ought to be able to take advantage of this. The German Socialists must be allowed to go to Stockholm as a matter requiring no argument. . . . If Michaelis now solves the Belgian question, he will be in a very strong position, both at home and abroad. To bring it forward now while our arms are successful and when Lloyd George has just rebuffed the pacifists in Britain and the Entente, means not weakness but shrewdness and good will. I am convinced that this is the direction in which we must act. I would be ready both to write and to speak for this cause, if it should appear necessary and if a favourable opportunity presents itself.

I know exactly what you are thinking of all this. You may be right, but a solution by the method of " squaring the circle " is so problematical that it is the duty of us all, including the party men who are in the know, so to back and support any reasonable policy adopted by Michaelis that it may serve the interests of the country and if possible end in peace. Here, too, we must see to it that the good is not wasted through a hope in a possible better.'

The answer was :

'*22nd August*, 1917.

. . . How difficult it is for me to hold to the itinerary which Your Highness traces out, the enclosed exposé will show. I gave it to-day to Herr v. Haeften. There is only one way to victory, and when a man has once had a clear vision of it, his peace of mind is at an end. All the same your paralyzing proverb : " The better is the enemy of the good," has led me to submit the enclosed telegram [1] . . . first to the Chancellery and then to Haussmann. . . . I believe now that the crisis will develop more swiftly than I thought.

The feeling of the Majority Committee when it met yesterday was as follows :

1. The National Liberals would rather be rid of the new man to-day than to-morrow. Payer's line of protest was too feeble for their taste. I heard Carolath say to Haussmann : " It is all

[1] See above p. 144, n. 2.

our fault, we should not have adjourned." Their chief anger was directed against the parody of parliamentarism. In their demand for parliamentary reform they go further than the Progressives.

2. The Centre has been irrevocably driven in the direction of pacifism by the Vatican. It insists that the Majority resolution shall once more be loyally accepted, but this time in all its detail.

3. The Progressives are being led by Payer and Haussmann. Haussman is the driving force, and he knows exactly what he is driving at.

4. The Social Democrats are working for the rejection of Helfferich's budget, and they may succeed.

Haussmann summed up the situation as follows: "I find the House in a fighting mood which I did not expect. At our very first sitting we decided to have the reply which the Chancellor thinks of sending to the Pope submitted to us.

Query: "Would you make such humiliating demands on the Chancellor of your choice?"

Answer: "No, we have confidence in him."

This is the pith of the situation: The Majority feels this Chancellor to be a Minority Chancellor, feels in consequence humiliated, and tries to get rid of this sense of impotence by the imposition of humiliating demands.

Such demands lead in the long run to a strengthening of Parliament at the expense of the Imperial Government and of the Crown.

That this Government is a stop-gap, is felt more strongly with every hour that passes. Much depends on the conversation between the leaders of the Majority and the Chancellor which is taking place to-day.'

Immediately afterwards came a supplementary report:

'*22nd August*, 1917.

I have the honour to inform Your Highness at once that to-day the crisis over the Chancellorship came to a head with dramatic suddenness.

He declared abruptly in the Main Committee that he had *always* said to the representatives of the Majority that he did not accept the basis of the Majority resolution. Thereupon the storm broke loose, to the derisive joy of the Socialist Minority. Finally words were entered in the minutes which carried the implication that the Chancellor had made false statements, and the Chancellor used language which amounted to a retraction of the remarks which he had made in the forenoon.'

The letter closed with a piece of news which startled and annoyed me. Certain politicians, it appeared, thought of suggesting to Michaelis that he should resign, and of asking him to propose me as his successor. I sent a very rude telegram to Berlin, which had the desired effect. The idea was intolerable to me that any hope of my becoming Chancellor should aggravate the situation.

Michaelis once more conjured the crisis away. On the afternoon of 22nd August, when he had once more left the rails, Haussmann and Fehrenbach had agreed to force the pace next day and if possible bring about the fall of the Chancellor. Then a parliamentary ' Bierabend ' took place in the Chancellor's palace. It passed off very cosily, and next morning when Haussmann urged him to the course they had agreed on Fehrenbach declined, saying : ' How can we, he was so nice to us yesterday ! ' Haussmann himself wanted to conclude his speech with a demand to the Chancellor either to raise the question of confidence in accordance with parliamentary usage, or to take the unparliamentary course of reporting to the Emperor what had happened, adding that the confidence which had been placed in him had received a shake. He was forbidden to do so by his party leader.

All the same, the words which Haussmann was finally permitted to use were clear enough.

> ' If a Minority Chancellor accepts the basis of this (peace) resolution only reluctantly and reserving himself the liberty to recant, he will appear abroad to be weak and dishonest ; the Majority which submits to such treatment is stamped as helpless, and their resolution loses all its value.
>
> Our problem is—how to appear abroad to be at once moderate and strong. For that purpose we need a Chancellor who represented the feeling of the Majority at the time when our army stood before Paris ; he could lead us because he would have been ahead of many of us. Such a Chancellor would stand on the solid foundation of the Majority's instinctive confidence. Nervous attempts to make sure that his opinion of the afternoon was his opinion of the forenoon would be ruled out.

The very fact that our military situation is favourable enables us to give the outside world an impression of moderation in our war aims without creating an impression of weakness. The conclusion that we are showing signs of weakness is only possible when a man who is held abroad to be an annexationist suddenly becomes moderate in his war aims. I do not assert that the Chancellor is an annexationist; but it is remarkable that the parties of the Right are always greeting him as their man. . . . The Entente is morally in a weaker position than we, and therein lies our great chance of victory. But we can only take advantage of this chance, and we can only bring about the collapse of the enemy morale by political means, if unity is seen far and wide to subsist between our Government and the Majority. We need a Chancellor who is not only a man of humane principle but also has the power of suggestion which can give telling expression to this principle. For since, as Herr v. Kuehlmann rightly said yesterday, we are now dealing with public opinion, high politics become an art of expression.'

Once more the acute stage of the crisis passed. On the 24th August I was informed:

'This really chronic crisis, which cannot be allayed, springs from the universal feeling that this man has discredited himself and the good name of the German Empire, and nothing that he does in the future can restore confidence in his fitness for his post. Junck, a Member of Parliament, shouted: "Come back, Theobald, and all will be forgiven!"[1] And David said amid much amusement: "If one of us had been asked six weeks ago whether he wished to become Chancellor, he would have assumed a look of charming modesty—and thought twice about it. But if the questioner had then added: 'otherwise it will be Michaelis the Under-Secretary,' then every one of us would have said: 'Oh, in that case, I'll have a try at it!'"'

IV. The Diminution of the Rights of the Chancellor

Michaelis himself did not feel at all sure of the Reichstag. He had made great concessions and had consented to increased supervision. The Social Democrats, confident in the rising strength of their position, had no objection to leaving the Chancellor in office for some time yet.

[1] Bethmann Hollweg's Christian name was Theobald. The expression 'Theobald, komme zurueck' is an echo of the 'agony column.' [Tr.]

'*24th August*, 1917.

What we are having just now—my Chief agrees with me—is not parliamentarization but Workers' and Soldiers' Council. If the preposterous demand addressed to Michaelis and accepted by him, namely that he should consent to the co-operation of the party leaders in preparing his reply to the Papal Note, had been addressed to Asquith, he would have sent his footman to answer it. Such concessions are inevitable so long as the Chancellor has not the confidence of the Majority. . . . My Chief, who strongly urged in Kreuznach that in spite of all doubts he should be given a chance, is entirely of my opinion. . . . What makes a solution so absolutely necessary, is that the Majority parties admit that they would accept the leadership of a man who has their confidence. This, of course, can only happen if the habits of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council are not given time to take root.

We are faced with the problem of leadership in all its alarming significance, and an outcome like this is enough to make one cry for thinking of our people drifting leaderless into its fourth winter of war or into a bad peace.'

The Committee of Seven demanded that an unequivocal public reply should be given to the plain question asked by the Pope.

This diminution of the rights of the Chancellor and the Crown arising, as it does, out of the distrust of the Reichstag is beginning to cause alarm in Government circles, as does also the throwing away of opportunities in foreign policy. About this time (31st August) Solf, Secretary of State for the Colonies, decided to send the following telegram to Ludendorff :

' Fruit of our victories cannot be gathered if we renounce any longer the use of psychological methods of fighting. Otherwise either material preponderance Entente 1918 or diplomatic preponderance united enemies 1917 at conference table. On other hand result corresponding to sacrifices still attainable if available psychological weapons are ruthlessly applied to disorganization of English war industry, chloroforming of American war spirit, separation of the Allies, and simultaneously German home morale is protected against all enemy attempts at demoralization by making sure of popular confidence. It is a necessary condition that Germany's entire home and foreign

policy should be employed on a unified plan for lightening of German and aggravation of British military effort.

For this purpose appears to me necessary : enemy must lose hope in internal convulsions in Germany ; at present we are drifting inevitably into second crisis. We need at all costs solution with stamp of finality. Such a solution is : Majority as pivot but not as leading factor ; authoritative statesmanship can bring this about, it must have confidence of Majority and then needs no Board of Guardians. Such a body supervising detailed business of government is an absurdity and a dangerous precedent. Secrecy, which is as important for politics as for strategy, impossible under it, but worst result is abolition of idea of leadership which has made Germany great. The Committee of Seven originated in distrust and not in confidence. This yielding in the wrong place is all the more disgraceful that Balfour has just rejected democratic supervision of foreign policy on principle. . . .'

V. Efforts to Secure the Declaration on Belgium

At the end of August and in the first half of September the Committee of Seven are several times called in to discuss the answer to the Pope. The representatives of the Majority parties continue to insist that a plain answer must be given to the Pope's plain question. Herr v. Kuehlmann held a different opinion. By utilizing former connections he had attempted a diplomatic approach to London from which he counted on greater success than from the action of the Vatican. It was irreconcilable with the plan which he had adopted that Germany should bind herself publicly. He firmly declined even to refer to the future of Belgium in our note. I learned from Haussmann that the Secretary of State had actually gone so far as to threaten his resignation in case the Committee of Seven insisted. Kuehlmann had his way, thanks to the confidence which he enjoyed on the Left—he was indeed their favourite for the Chancellorship. In the end the Committee of Seven acquiesced [1]

[1] According to Bredt (*op. cit.* p. 146) five members (Conservative, National Liberal, Centre and Progress) of the Committee of Seven agreed that no mention should be made of Belgium in the reply. Scheidemann demanded a clear reply on the subject of Belgium and Ebert also put in a

in our note on German war aims containing nothing but a reference in general terms to the peace resolution of the Reichstag :

> ' With regard to the importance which attaches to the pronouncement of His Holiness, the Imperial Government has not failed to submit the suggestions contained in it to a serious and conscientious examination ; the special measures which it has taken in the closest co-operation with the Representative Assembly of the German Nation for the discussion of and reply to the question put to it bear witness to the importance which it attaches to finding reliable foundations for a just and lasting peace in consonance with the desire of His Holiness and the peace pronouncement of the Reichstag of 19th July.'

The Crown Council took place on 11th September. Kuehlmann demanded a free hand on Belgium, in other words, full authority to use the promise of Belgian restoration in his soundings in London.[1] The Kaiser gave him his verdict

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plea but with no success. That the Social Democrats completely conformed to the decision of the Committee, is proved by Landsberg's speech on 6th October in which he spoke of the reply to the Papal Note as ' a good piece of work.' (Helfferich, *Vom Eingreifen Amerikas bis zum Zusammenbruch*, p. 186.)

[1] While this book is in the press my attention is drawn to the Memorandum (printed in v. Korostowetz, *Erinnerungen*, Vol. II.), which Kuehlmann prepared as a basis of discussion for the negotiations at the Crown Council on 11th September, 1917. It calls attention to the symptoms which had also come to my knowledge : 1. The telegram of the Englishman which had reached Berlin by way of the ' Anti-Oorlog-Raad ' ; 2. Asquith's question. But at the moment when one might have expected the conclusion to be drawn that the public declaration should be got out to answer the public question regarding the future of Belgium, the argument swerves aside—' only a declaration to *official* England can be taken into consideration.' The essential portions of the Memorandum run as follows :

' . . . The Belgian question has been drawn more and more into the centre of diplomatic interest so that at the moment it may be described as the burning question.

. . . At the same time the matter is so important because the whole group just referred to appears to be unwilling to support far-reaching French aims in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine. It is certainly rather to be expected that if the leading English statesmen are given complete assurance that the specifically British aims (the preservation of the Belgian coast and liberation of Belgium in general) can be achieved without a winter campaign, they will bring pressure to bear on France in the direction of renunciation of aspirations in Alsace-Lorraine. It would be

against the army command which once more tabled demands for securities (Liège).

Haussmann refused to acquiesce in the peace move of the Vatican being side-tracked. Would it not still be possible to give the Pope and Asquith a satisfactory answer in supplementary speeches by the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs? He went to Kuehlmann, but failed to convince him. He then turned to Haeften—he knew that this intimate associate of Ludendorff's had been working for weeks for the public declaration on Belgium, in the belief that he was carrying out the intentions of his chief. On 9th August General Ludendorff had not been able to see Michaelis and to inform him of the Supreme Command's concurrence in a declaration on Belgium, but the Chief of the Imperial Chancellery, v. Graevenitz, had been acquainted with the facts. At the end of August Haeften had spoken to Ludendorff again and been assured that the agreement of the

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a reversal of the procedure which the Entente is at the moment adopting with Austria's help against us.

Such a mode of procedure suits the situation admirably. We cannot make an end unless we somehow or other drive a wedge into the enemy coalition, just as the Entente is trying to drive wedges between Austria and us. We are separated from France by an ocean of hatred. To make concessions worth mentioning in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine is absolutely out of the question for a Germany which is not completely beaten. We have therefore nothing to offer France. The weakness too of the whole plan of Austria or rather of Czernin lies in this that they hope or believe that they can detach France from England, although if they thought the matter over calmly, they would have to admit that they have nothing themselves to offer France, that they cannot under any circumstances squeeze enough out of Germany to make up in any degree for this defect, and that France for all the intelligence of her statesmen is, as things now are, completely in England's hands; so that, even if the plan were possible, and France were won to the idea of peace, she will be absolutely unable to force her will on England, while on the other hand a British 'request' to France to put her dream of Alsace and Lorraine in her pocket must be regarded in Paris as an order, even if it makes them gnash their teeth.

If we do not wish to drop into the wake of Austro-Hungarian policy in the manner referred to above, a manner absolutely fatal to our interests, we must display some diplomatic activity. It should take the form of ascertaining by suitable soundings whether in the opinion of the leading English statesmen a completely unequivocal official German declaration on the future fate of Belgium would lead to peace negotiations with the Western powers or not.

These preliminary negotiations—which would have to be conducted

9th August still held. The initiated had naturally to reckon with other influences which might at any moment revive cherished strategical projects. No one who knew General Ludendorff would presume to expect that when the final and irrevocable decision on Belgium's future fell to be made, he would surrender a position so tenaciously held without a struggle. Proud men have little taste for conducting their conversion in public or before their official antagonists. But for the purposes of our foreign policy it was enough that General Ludendorff complied—whether angrily, reluctantly or tacitly.

Before the Crown Council of 11th September, in which he once again pleaded for Liège, the General had sent for Haeften and broken it to him that he would try to obtain military securities. Haeften objected and although he did not carry his point he received the impression that the avoidance of a fourth winter of war was still the General's

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and could be conducted in absolute secrecy—need not presuppose the absolute condition that the German authorities must commit themselves to a final and definitive programme on Belgium. This final commitment would however have to follow immediately after the result of the soundings came to hand. For if the result of the soundings is that Britain is ready in such a case to enter peace negotiations, a new and very important factor would have to be taken into consideration in the decision on the future fate of Belgium. To enter the autumn and winter without having created a clear and diplomatically unobjectionable situation by a sounding of this sort is impossible for Germany. To me it seems feasible to stand up to the onslaught of the Reichstag Majority with its insistence on an unequivocal declaration on Belgium, and of the friends of peace in Germany, if the Government itself takes diplomatic steps in this matter in the direction of a speedy and absolutely clear solution. Similarly we can only avoid the pressure of Austria with her hints at a separate peace and the danger of being drawn from concession to concession in Austria's wake if we ourselves recover the leadership in the Alliance which has unfortunately often slipped from our hands, by an energetic diplomacy which knows what it wants.

The proposal which necessarily follows from what has been said is this : " Even if a decision on the future fate of Belgium is not to be taken immediately, the Chancellor after agreement with the Supreme Command shall ask the consent of His Majesty the Kaiser to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs ascertaining by discreet but safe methods what are the minimum demands of the Western Powers in regard to Belgium and whether a declaration which should be binding but should in the first instance be given confidentially from Government to Government on the future settlement of the Belgian question would have as its immediate consequence the opening of peace negotiations." '

main concern and that he would yield in the Crown Council. It never occurred to him after that that the decision of His Majesty would not be binding on all parties. Since 9th August it had been his firm conviction that Ludendorff's consent to the declaration on Belgium could be obtained as soon as it was demanded by a resolute Government as the only means either to secure a peace of understanding in 1917 or to weaken and divide our enemies for the campaign of 1918. Accordingly Haeften decided on 20th September to call on Kuehlmann. The memorable conversation which took place ran somewhat as follows : Haeften began by declaring that the situation was ripe for a step by the Foreign Secretary, and that the Government could now get the Supreme Command to agree to the public declaration on Belgium. Kuehlmann replied : ' That is no concern of you soldiers.' Thereupon Haeften demanded the declaration on Belgium as a military-political weapon, to whose use in our present situation the army was obliged to attach importance. The Secretary of State retorted impatiently : ' You will kindly allow me to decide when I am to make this declaration. Who told you that I wanted to sell this particular horse ? He is the finest animal in my stable.' [1]

In order to understand Kuehlmann's policy let us again insist that he never for a moment dreamt of retaining Belgium. He was for the full restoration of Belgian sovereignty and integrity. But he was crippled by the diplomatic dogma that a pawn should never be cheapened before negotiations have begun, and he hoped to bring about negotiations by the tried means of secret diplomacy. And so the old fallacy of assuming an official readiness for peace in England cropped up once more. True, some moderate utterances had just been made by British Ministers, but they were chiefly manoeuvres to keep the war-disturbing pacifists quiet. Every secret German feeler, whether it went by way of Spain, or by way of Pacelli-de Salis, or by way of Rosen and Heemskerk, led in the end to Lloyd George, and Lloyd George wanted war.

[1] Statement of General Haeften before the Second Commission of Investigation on 2nd March, 1922.

On 21st September General Ludendorff had the following conversation with the chief editor of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* :

> ' As a soldier he must know for certain how Germany is to be defended in the future. He could not expose Germany's most important industrial area to the danger of having its valuable plant destroyed within a few hours of the outbreak of war by enemy flying squadrons. And this danger existed if the enemy base were so near as Belgium. Hence our war aim. But, continued General Ludendorff, with strong emphasis on every single word, the military situation must decide whether this aim can be attained. If (as has so far not been the case) anything comes from the enemy side which shows a disposition to negotiate loyally on the question of peace, then, but not till then, it will be time to decide *whether one ought to and is obliged to fight on to attain these aims*.[1]
>
> From Ludendorff's tone as a whole it could not be concluded that he was determined not to lay down his arms until we obtained annexations.' [2]

This interview, I think, confirms my view of Ludendorff's attitude. I should sum it up as follows : The ground at Headquarters was ready for an assault by the statesman, undertaken with the objective of securing the public declaration on Belgium. This assault was not made.

VI. Conclusion of the Chancellorship Crisis

In the course of October I was informed that even General Ludendorff foresaw that Michaelis would have to go. Hahn was summoned by Haeften to Kreuznach to inform the General regarding the mobilization of the American resources,[3] the moral basis of the American effort, and the prospects of Lloyd George's plan to carry the war safely over the winter.

The gist of Hahn's report was as follows :

The American war machine will be set in irresistible motion unless a change of system in Germany demolishes the watchword of ' democracy against autocracy.'

At this point Haeften interrupted : ' The democratic idea

[1] My italics.

[2] Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 445 f.

[3] Wilson had just pledged his country to the French war aim of Alsace-Lorraine.

of the Entente may be nonsense, Your Excellency—American idealism may all be nonsense—but it is mobilizing millions and is furnishing our enemy with the men whom they need so badly.'

Hahn then continued : A change of system is useless without a change of men. The chief task of the Imperial Government is to make an attack, timed and planned with sound psychology, on the enemy home fronts, and above all to paralyze the British effort by the suggestion that an honourable peace is being shipwrecked by Lloyd George's fault. Ludendorff agreed and asked who the right man was to direct this psychological operation.

Then Haeften, supported by Bartenwerffer, indicated Prince Max as the man whose name and whose programme would work as the most powerful explosive abroad.

On 9th October the third and last Michaelis crisis broke out.[1] Dittmann's interpellation regarding 'agitation by superior officers in the army in the interest of Pan-German policy' was down for discussion. In his speech to the motion Dittmann maintained that sentences of death and hard labour had been passed on sailors 'for the expression of their political views.' Michaelis counter-attacked. He announced that Capelle, Secretary of State for the Navy, would make a report on the discovery and punishment of the lower deck conspiracy. Then he continued : His declaration of complete impartiality towards all parties did not apply to parties whose objects were dangerous to the State. He regarded the Independents as being 'on the other side of this line.' Thereupon Capelle presented a report on the mutiny, whose object had been to paralyze the fleet. He accused Dittman, Haase and Vogtherr of having known and approved these designs. Indignation was at first directed against the Independents, but when it became clear in the course of the debate that this terrible accusation had not yet been substantiated, and that the Law Officers had actually declined to proceed with a charge on the evidence submitted to them, there was a sudden revulsion of feeling. The excite-

[1] Cf. Helfferich, *op. cit.* p. 184 ff.

ment of the patriotic Left turned against Michaelis and Capelle, whose action was felt to be unfair. Not only the Majority Social Democrats but also the Progressives, represented by Naumann, sprang to the aid of the attacked members of Germany's Independent Social Democratic Party. Naumann, who, if anyone, was in close touch with the feeling of the army, protested against ' assertions being made in this House, on the strength of proceedings which have been dropped, affecting the honour of anyone who belongs to the Representative Assembly of the German Empire and the German people. The words which the Chancellor has just spoken compel us all to stand by the party attacked and its right of existence.'

The Inter-Party Committee—in Government circles it went by the name of ' the soviet '—held a meeting. The National Liberals had asked to be included, and so the Committee became the spokesman of an enlarged Majority. There was complete agreement that Michaelis must be removed before next session. Payer, the President of the Committee, was commissioned to undertake the tactful enlightenment of Michaelis. But the Chancellor regarded it as his duty to remain at his post, and had it announced in the Press that Capelle had gone further in his assertions than Michaelis had authorized and would therefore hand in his resignation. The whole majority Press protested against this attempt to make a scapegoat of Capelle.

Haussmann now adopted a course whose object was to pass the lead in the solution of the crisis over to the Crown. He got the Inter-Party Committee to pass a resolution that four representatives of the Majority parties should go and lay the facts before the chief of the Civil Cabinet but should not mention candidates by name even if Valentini asked for names. He further composed a memorandum which could not fail to remove the last remaining doubt regarding the loyalty of the representatives of the Majority and is characteristic of Haussmann's style and tact.

> ' Should His Majesty the Kaiser come to the decision that a change of Chancellor is necessary, then the representatives of

different parties have come to the conviction that it is in the highest interest of the State to guarantee the peaceful development of our internal politics. This policy would bring about that unity which the people in arms and the people at home urgently need. This goal can only be reached by way of a loyal understanding in respect of home and foreign policy while the war lasts. The lack of such an understanding in the past has brought it about that for months past there has been no internal unity in Germany.

We accordingly beg Your Majesty, before making a decision, to instruct the person who is to be entrusted with the supreme conduct of the business of the Empire to consult the Reichstag.'

This document was presented to Herr v. Valentini by Stresemann, Trimborn, Suedekum and Fischbeck in person. It sealed the fall of Michaelis.

I heard later from Haussmann that Valentini proposed me as successor to the Chancellor in the first instance. His Majesty declined, feeling that while he could accept the advice of an elder statesman he could not accept that of a junior peer.

Count Hertling was summoned to Berlin. I believe that Count Eulenburg, the Minister of the Household, was foremost in promoting his candidature. His hope was that the Bavarian Prime Minister with his long experience of parliamentary tactics would succeed in breaking up the unnatural alliance between the Socialists and the Centre. It was confidently expected that the Reichstag would be unable to refuse him. What more could one do for ' parliamentarization ' than to select the Chancellor from one of the great Majority parties ?

Hertling arrived on 28th October. He at once made it clear that he would only accept the Chancellorship after an understanding with the parties. The same evening Hertling had a not very encouraging conversation with Erzberger.[1] Next morning or the morning after he was to see Ebert—the question whether the Social Democrats would support him or at least not go into opposition must determine his decision. Before this conversation took place Haussmann attempted to

[1] Cf. also for what follows Erzberger, *op. cit.* p. 292 ff.

confirm Ebert in his natural repugnance to Hertling's appointment. He urged that no concessions made by Hertling to the Majority ought to secure a Conservative the confidence of the Left. Abroad, too, his name would make no appeal. It was characteristic of Ebert that he took a purely impersonal line : ' If Hertling accepts our point of view in the questions that matter, we can make no objection to him.'

In the interview which followed, Hertling declared his adhesion to the universal, secret, equal franchise and to the peace of understanding. He promised Ebert that Payer, who enjoyed the special confidence of the Social Democrats, would be included in the Government. Ebert refused to consider the participation of the Social Democrats themselves in the new Government, but made it clear that Hertling's concessions on essential matters had so reassured him that his party would not go into opposition. Haussmann made a last attempt to defeat a candidature which seemed to him disastrous ; he summed up the situation as follows in the Press :

> ' . . . Count Hertling has asked for time to think the matter over. His scruples against taking over the office of Prime Minister of Prussia are particularly strong ; nor does this exhaust the list of Count Hertling's scruples. He intends to confer with leading politicians and has had a visit from Count Westarp. Count Hertling deserves our gratitude for his willingness at his advanced age to make the great sacrifice of undertaking the main burden of the cares of the Empire. The task is for him an immensely difficult one. He has a Clerical-Conservative past which encumbers him at every step in his approach to the new orientation, and in all his advances to the other side he must make special efforts to avoid the appearance of acting only from tactical motives. His activity as a Bavarian Minister has already given a widespread impression that he is a tactician. His opposition to the autonomy of Alsace-Lorraine also aggravates his task and permits him at most to fall back on the formula of an adjournment of the question till the conclusion of peace. He has also committed himself against the deletion of the final paragraph in Article Nine. We hope that the Reichstag appreciates the weight of these misgivings, and that a meeting of the Inter-Party Committee will be summoned for

to-morrow. We have seen in the case of Michaelis what a cruel task it is when the Chancellor has to stand up not only to the inevitable external conflicts but also to the inner conflict of tearing himself free from his own past ; and we have seen what a precious interval has been squandered in blood. How much easier would be the task and how much more fruitful the activity of a man who is the convinced and convincing advocate of the course which is now clearly foreshadowed, the course which every Chancellor must take in the end but which will be run more speedily and more successfully if it appears at home and abroad to be taken willingly.'

Public feeling against the candidature of Hertling grew. It was stated that he had decided to take the train home. Then v. Kuehlmann intervened and rushed matters.

He summoned the leaders of the Majority parties and told them that the Kaiser was trying a new method of forming a Government. The representatives of the Majority were being heard before the appointment of the Chancellor. But supposing that the Reichstag rejected a leader from the Centre, His Majesty would abandon the new method as unsuited to our conditions. There would even be danger of a reaction. The people who had long been advocating a military dictatorship might gain the upper hand.

These arguments had a great effect. An agreement was come to on the Liberal substructure. The Social Democrats agreed to the Chancellorship of Hertling on the condition that two Progressives would be included in the Government. I received a report of these proceedings ending with the words :

' Kuehlmann's entire procedure may be characterized as follows :

The Reichstag is encouraged to demand real guarantees to ensure the carrying out of a Liberal programme under a Conservative Prime Minister. These real guarantees lead to an extension of the power of the Reichstag such as the Reichstag itself certainly never aspired to. The picture is always the same : Every Conservative Chancellor magnifies the power of the Reichstag because he must remove distrust by concessions which restrict his freedom of action, and also the freedom of action of the Crown. . . .

Kuehlmann laid the main stress on the effect abroad and spoke of a " golden bridge to America," the idea being that the whole proceeding could be decked out as a " Victory of Parliamentarism." It was with the same object that the Payer-Friedberg solution was immediately telegraphed abroad.'

The outcome was a heavy blow to my associates. They had definitely counted on a solution which would bring us forward on the way to peace. I was reproached for having suppressed all agitation in my own favour. I was informed of the remark of an enemy diplomat that the last chance of a peace of understanding had been wrecked by federal selfishness and dynastic scruples.

I therefore wrote to Berlin :

' Brussels,
8th November, 1917.

. . . I know how you longed for the other solution, and I can feel with you in your heavy disappointment.

On the other hand I find it very hard to think myself into the mentality of the enemy diplomat who laid so much weight on your solution, for I cannot imagine the converse case of our saying that we will be able to negotiate only if Mr. X. takes charge. It strikes me as arbitrary, for this Mr. X. may fall ill or die and must that do away for good with the last possibilities of understanding ?

I have no notion how matters went in Berlin. Who, *e.g.*, sent the news abroad that dynastic reasons made the candidature impossible ? There was no question asked in Baden as far as I know. Was my name proposed to the Kaiser ? Who created Hertling ?

I am as certain now as I was before that I could not have acted differently. Any advance on my part would have cheapened the candidature and would have seriously damaged and weakened my position. Baden could only be blamed if a query had been put and answered in the negative. And so I could take note of the diplomat's opinion without the least personal feeling.

I believe that Hertling will hold out unless he falls ill. It would be an absurd travesty of parliamentary government if the Social Democrats refuse to work with a man who comes from the strongest party in their block. What more can people want ? It seems to me, too, in all soberness, that his

choice and appointment was carried out in as close touch with the parties as the Reichstag could wish.

I confess that I, too, have my scruples about him, and I should have to regard it as a sign of weakness in his position if the Socialists would not work with him. Anyhow, I regard him as a far stronger man than Michaelis, and a man of great parliamentary experience. How far he is the man to " act as if " and to make his " yea " his " nay," I cannot judge. You know me well enough to understand that it is impossible for me to take up the attitude that I would have been the better man. If I had thought it, it would certainly not be so. Whether my time is coming, or must come, is a matter on which I have no opinion. Should such a contingency arise, it will presumably knock at the door with far more compelling reasons.'

The answer was : ' I believe that necessity will knock at the door again, but then it will be too late.'

PART II

CHAPTER I

MY REPLY TO LORD LANSDOWNE'S LETTER

THE most promising period for political action set in with the close of each annual campaign.

On 28th November, 1917, the Russians had sued for armistice negotiations. The 2nd December saw the end of our counter-attack at Cambrai, which wiped out the one and only success of the British on the Western front. It surprised not only the British officers (in their pyjamas), but also the politicians. No one had reckoned with so big an undertaking on the Western front at this time of year.

And so it came about that on 29th November England had her greatest political sensation since the beginning of the war.

The *Daily Telegraph* published a letter from Lord Lansdowne on the subject of peace. That Lord Lansdowne secretly sympathized with the adherents of a peace of understanding we already knew from Press indiscretions. It was just a year since Lloyd George had overthrown Asquith's Cabinet, and Lansdowne had then been mentioned among those opponents of the 'Knock-out blow' policy who had to be got out of the way. Then at the beginning of August 1917 we had received news from the Hague that there was open talk in England of an Asquith-Lansdowne Ministry as an alternative to the Lloyd George Government. All the same the candour and decision of his step was startling.

Lord Lansdowne demanded the revision of the war aims which the Allies had announced on 10th January, 1917. He did not mention Alsace-Lorraine but gave the first place to the Belgian question. Just as Grey and Asquith had done in 1914-15:

> 'We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilized world, and an infinite addition to

the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. Security will be invaluable to a world which has the vitality to profit by it, but what will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them ? In my belief, if the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be brought to a close because on both sides the peoples of the countries involved realize that it has already lasted too long.'

In conclusion Lord Lansdowne begged the British Government to encourage the German peace party by giving them to understand that :

1. Britain does not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power ;
2. Britain does not seek to impose upon the German people any form of government other than that of their own choice.
3. Britain does not desire to deny to Germany her place among the commercial powers ;
4. Britain is ready to discuss the question of the freedom of the seas ;
5. Britain desires an international agreement for the peaceful regulation of international disputes.

The importance of this letter lay in the personality of the writer. Here was no faddist, but a tried Conservative statesman who had himself been a leading exponent of British Imperialism : from 1895 till 1900 he had been War Secretary ; from 1900 till 1905 he had been the Foreign Secretary who abandoned the policy of ' splendid isolation.' Before this he had been Governor-General of Canada, and Viceroy of India. Up to March 1917 he had been Conservative Leader in the House of Lords, but most important of all he had been a signatory of the letter of 2nd August, 1914,[1] which confirmed the wavering British Cabinet in its decision to enter the war at once on the side of France.

It would have been an error to conclude from Lansdowne's acceptance of the principle of the ' freedom of the seas ' that

[1] This letter was signed by the leaders of the Conservative Opposition (Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne) and recommended unconditional intervention on behalf of France and Russia, independently of the Belgian question.

he had swung into line with the Liberal idealists who had all along demanded that Britain should renounce the ruthless employment of her sea power. Since the development of the submarine weapon the watchword 'limitation of the right of capture at sea in favour of non-combatants' had ceased to be only the great historical claim of America and the continent of Europe against the British; it had actually become a claim of the island power against the continent. Indeed, since Archibald Hurd had exclaimed: 'We have been deinsulated by the U-boat,' I had always expected that the British Empire's watchful instinct of self-preservation would one day include the freedom of the seas in the British programme.[1]

There was no doubt that Lansdowne could unite on his programme the overwhelming majority of Labour under

[1] This idea, which cropped up more than once in the course of our discussions at that time, finds confirmation in the *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. See, *e.g.*, the note of 2nd February, 1915, in Vol. I., p. 376: 'I lunched with Sir William Tyrrell (Grey's private secretary) to-day, and we had a most interesting conversation. He spoke with entire frankness. . . . Tyrrell believed that in the convention I suggested yesterday, if an agreement should be made between all the Powers, neutral and belligerent, to establish rules governing future warfare, Great Britain would consent to the absolute freedom of merchantmen of all nations to sail the seas in time of war unmolested. This was brought out in our conference yesterday, but Tyrrell developed in his conversation to-day that Great Britain recognized that the submarine had changed the status of maritime warfare and in the future Great Britain would be better protected by such a policy than she has been in the past by maintaining an overwhelming navy.' Then House goes to Berlin and points out to the German statesmen (as he tells Grey in a letter) the great advantages which Germany would secure from a recognition of the Freedom of the Seas on the part of England. He finds a ready echo with the Chancellor and Zimmermann. 'From my conversations with you, I knew that you saw a future more secure and splendid for England in this new direction than in the old. I gave no sign of this, but I left them thinking what concessions they might make in order to reach so promising an end.' (p. 428). He also discusses the matter with Lord Loreburn who clearly sees the advantage to England: 'He told me that he thought if we could bring about the Freedom of the Seas, it would be the greatest act of statesmanship that had been accomplished in centuries. He thought, it would be of a 100 per cent. value to other nations and 120 per cent. to England, though we would have great difficulty in getting the English mind to see this . . . I told him, I shivered in Berlin when I proposed it to the Chancellor and the Foreign Office, for fear they would see that it was more to England's advantage than their own and would therefore not be willing to make concessions because of it." (p. 432).

Henderson, practically the whole Asquith group, and a number of elder statesmen who stood between the Conservative and the Liberal parties. The parliamentary correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* (30th November, 1917) gave the best answer to the question: What is behind Lansdowne?

> 'M.P.'s refuse to believe that he was merely unburthening his own conscience. . . . No doubt there is more than meets the eye in the letter. It comes at a moment, as a member points out, when it expresses a great body of public opinion which has been so far inarticulate in order not to embarrass the Government. The opinion was there, and it will pluck up courage to support Lord Lansdowne. It needed a leader, and has found one. . . . That the letter is of a very real importance—'real politics'—need not be doubted.'

Lord Loreburn remarked that Lansdowne's letter had produced the only revolution which, he trusted, the country would ever see, a revolution in public opinion.

Now what was Lansdowne's object?

Our Dutch informant wrote: 'Lansdowne's aim is that a German statesman shall make a plain pronouncement on Belgium.'

The prospects of this were very slight.

The following sentences from a confidential note I saw at the time are bitterer than was called for; but I reproduce them to show how the passivity of the Government was then driving men to exasperation and despair:

> 'It is a necessary preliminary to any moral offensive against the enemy war spirit that the Foreign Office should be really convinced of the following points:
>
> (*a*) The task of influencing public opinion in enemy countries falls within the province of German policy;
>
> (*b*) It is also one of its duties, so that the war may be made easier for us and more difficult for our enemies;
>
> (*c*) Peace cannot come until the . . . better England has overthrown Lloyd George and the Lloyd George mentality.
>
> These requirements cannot be fulfilled, since the Foreign Office:
>
> 1. Rejects all propaganda in enemy countries by way of public pronouncement as pointless;

2. Refuses in any event, with an eye to our public opinion, to make the declaration on Belgium because " conditions of peace must only be discussed between Government and Government " ;

3. Regards the fall of Lloyd George as far from desirable. To have this versatile man to deal with appears in certain quarters to offer positive advantages ;

4. The reason is that the task of diplomacy is regarded as being only to liquidate the war, not to assist it.

5. A moral offensive can only be opened by men who, while they are endowed with a full share of the astuteness of the political realist, also display a strong moral bent in their political dealings. (Bismarck had the advantage of such a combination).'

Such was the official temper, and it explains why the appeal of my Berlin associates not to miss another unique opportunity was on that occasion addressed only to the military authorities. The warning cannot be read to-day without emotion :

' Lansdowne's step has clearly opened a rift in the British home front. This rift does not follow the line of the old party grouping. Conservatives, Liberals and Labour men confront Conservatives, Liberals and Labour men. Two Englands suddenly appear before us, the one ready to recognize our right in the world, the other only to be faced in a life and death struggle. I should estimate their relative strength to be about equal. The rift is not yet so deep that it cannot be closed. The Conservative Party is deeply disquieted by the split in its ranks and would like nothing better than that Lansdowne's step should pass into oblivion as quickly as possible.

We have a supreme interest in seeing that the rift . . . is not closed. Lord Lansdowne's letter was only a beginning. The British home front is as yet only dinted ; Germany needs a break-through. . . .

Germany can force this break-through. . . .

Lord Lansdowne has gone so far that after an authentic German declaration on Belgium he must speak the decisive word on which all depends and without which there can be no break-through : " We must now enter on negotiations. Our differences can be bridged by diplomacy. . . . "

The great psychological moments at which Germany can shatter the British home front always fall into the few weeks

which lie between the end of one campaign and the beginning of the next.

Answer to the objection that we must first obtain a military decision.

Every blow that we strike in the West, unless it results in the complete and final collapse of the enemy armies, postpones, in a political sense, the breach in the British home front. In misfortune the rift closes, just as happened in the Boer War. . . . I remember also how Verdun only hammered Anglo-French cohesion closer than ever. But if a great blow in the West *followed* the breach in the British home front, the effect would be totally different. Then the rift can no longer be healed, after half the people have declared that they want peace and the Government, in defiance of the opposition, has forced the continuation of the war.

. . . Everything depends on the moment at which we enter negotiations. Whether we can enforce our demands will depend primarily on our military strength at the moment when we begin negotiations. If we are in a position to say " no " and to strike once more, then we can carry our demands. But if Germany appears at the conference table battered and bled white, even though she be at the summit of her military triumphs, our enemies can hamstring us diplomatically after they have failed to do it in the field. *The German offensive in the West is a more powerful political weapon now in anticipation than it will be after it is over.*[1]

It is of the highest importance for the entire development of our internal politics that peace should come about through the moderation of our military leaders. If the nation is to remain proud of its army, it must never be said that a situation diplomatically ripe for peace was allowed to pass by because the soldiers insisted on playing out their hands to the last trump. Even the genius among our soldiers, even Moltke, needed the counterpoise of the moderating statesman. To-day we have no Bismarck to act as counterpoise. *And that lays upon our commanders the immense, the prodigious, the superhuman responsibility of themselves providing the counterpoise to purely military demands.*'[1] (11th December, 1917.)

I do not know whether this warning ever reached General Ludendorff. In any case the Supreme Command was no longer in a receptive mood. If General Ludendorff had had

[1] My italics.

his choice in August 1917 between a campaign in 1918 and a peace of understanding in 1917, he would have consented even to the plain declaration on Belgium to bring about the peace of understanding. But now the Command was wrestling with the great decision for the 1918 offensive. And at the same time an idea was gaining ground at headquarters which in January 1918 actually found its way into the Press [1] : ' If we strike once more the peace we make must at least be worth while—it must be no peace of renunciation, but a peace of security.' I felt sure at the time that if the Imperial Government had not combated this fallacy, it had at least not encouraged it. This was not so. Colonel Schwertfeger in his analysis of the question of political and military responsibility [2] has published a letter of Count Hertling to the General Field-Marshal, dated 7th January, 1918, which contains the following sentences :

> ' If then with the gracious help of God the contemplated new offensive under the tried leadership of Your Excellency, supported by the heroism and will to victory of our soldiers, leads to the decisive successes for which we hope, then we are in a position in our peace negotiations with the Western powers to insist on conditions demanded by the security of our frontiers, our economic interests and our international position after the war. I am hopeful that it may be possible to convince also the Reichstag, with the exception of the Social Democrats, of this. No effort in this direction will be spared.'

This attitude explains why the Chancellor paid no attention to Lansdowne's challenge. As Count Hertling and Kuehlmann were silent, we decided, in order that the British statesman might not be discouraged by the absence of an echo, to answer him on our own. On 14th December, 1917 I made a speech on foreign policy in the Upper Chamber of Baden. On 21st December Solf spoke in the Philharmonic Hall in Berlin on the ' Future of Africa.' The

[1] The *Tag*, 25th January, 1918.

[2] *Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs, Entstehung, Durchfuehrung und Zusammenbruch der Offensive von* 1918. Vol. I. : *Gutachten des Obersten a.D. Schwertfeger : Die Frage der politisch-militaerischen Verantwortlichkeit.* Part I. : *Bis zum Beginn der Offensive* 1918 (21st March, 1918), Berlin, 1922, p. 41.

liberating phrase ' Restoration of Belgium ' we could, of course, not utter.

Behind the two speeches there was a common plan. We wished to tell Lansdowne, without addressing him directly, that the German party in favour of understanding which it was his aim to encourage, was quite ready for negotiations with the better England which he represented, but equally determined to fight the Knock-out Government to a finish. The latter—or its temper—would have to abdicate if an all-round peace of ' contentment ' were to be attained. But we also desired to cut at the root of an obstinate prejudice among our own people, that might and morality must under all circumstances be hostile forces, and that ethics in politics could be represented only by an anaemic pacifism, while imperialism must necessarily ride rough-shod over the ideals of humanity and right.

The champion of our colonial ideals made it his main object to free German imperial ambition from its continental blinkers and to point to proud moral aims beyond the sea, beside which the acquisition of Briey and Longwy must seem as nothing.

My wish was to utter a warning, while our military situation was at its climax, that the world would never acquiesce in our prodigious power unless the world felt that there was a feeling of responsibility to humanity behind it. And we thought we should like to give a trial to those methods of propaganda which we considered right and had hitherto preached to deaf ears :

1. We must defend our honour against the enemy anathema —that is, in essence, against the double lie of Germany's sole responsibility for the outbreak of the war and for its ' lawless ' conduct. We must make our enemies tired and sick of their atrocity propaganda on the principle that the best parry is the cut.

2. But in attacking the enemy one must go to work in such a way as not to fan the flame of national hatred ; [1] otherwise

[1] British Imperialism knew no such restraint ; on the contrary it was a staple feature of the war propaganda over there to appeal to private revenge.

that very 'war of annihilation' temper which it is one's object to combat is fostered. Special care should be taken in the case of propaganda pointed at Britain not to depict those responsible for enemy atrocities as typical representatives of their nation, but to quote chapter and verse to show that they are outraging the best traditions of their own country.

3. To put the needed drive into this political offensive the German sword must remain clean, otherwise we lack the unassailable platform for our assault. Those who speak for the German people must not adopt an uncritical and pharisaic attitude towards the sins of Germany; they can count on a hearing abroad only if they address a stern warning to their fellow-countrymen as well.

Since the autumn of 1914 this course had been urged again and again. The attitude in which our authorities confronted slander was: 'Set your teeth and deny it!' Many of our intellectuals shared this primitive notion. I remember the 'professors' manifesto' of the 3rd October, 1914, addressed 'to the civilized world,' which set out to deny atrocities and which merely gave the Entente a handle for an endless agitation against German culture. More than one powerful thrust which touched English honour in particular had been driven home; but our propaganda had never really got beyond the embryo stage.

Von Kuehlmann—his grounds were different, it is true—was even more coy than Bethmann. He frankly declared that controversy on the subject of guilt for the war and in it would make it difficult for him to create the right atmosphere for negotiations.

Dr. Solf and I therefore felt ourselves called upon to attempt a moral offensive independently of the Foreign Office. We arranged that Solf should move to the attack on the ground of atrocities and I on the ground of war guilt.

Solf took for his starting point Lord Robert Cecil's pathetic announcement:

> 'And if we are in any degree successful, I should tremble at the thought of handing back natives who had been freed from such a Government (the German),'

and replied :

'One really wonders where the British Foreign Secretary goes for his information. Is it still to the same old atrocity bureau which supplied him with the legend of the German corpse factory and more recently with that gem about the proposed introduction of bigamy into Germany ?

. . . It would be un-German and pharisaic to deny that our colonial past has also its dark spots. But the list of our sins is not, by a long way, so long and so black as the British. . . . I dislike raking up the history of atrocities ; as a fighting method it is superficial and unreal. If we wish to pierce to the heart of the problem, who has the right to forge a colonial policy, we must ask the question : What did the chiefs and other members of the different colonial administrations before the war think and how did they act ?

We answer that all colonial experts know that the principle which I ventured to formulate years ago in the Reichstag, " a colony is a mission field," has been carried out in British as well as in German colonial policy. We had only begun the working out of our reforms ; but since Dernburg's time Germany had been on the right track. The supreme test of our native policy has been the war. In all our colonies our protegés have stood by us, although it was obvious to most of them that they were defending a lost position.

I have often discussed the treatment of natives with governors of British colonies and know what they think of the German native policy. In the interest of these gentlemen I refrain from repeating what they said then ; for in present-day England it is regarded almost as high treason to have ever passed a fair judgment on the enemy, even before the war. I should like to say only this much : the British know very well that their accusations against our colonial past are built on sand, and they also know how many witnesses in our favour can be found in Britain itself. They have succeeded, it is true, by means of a colossal reign of terror, in striking these witnesses dumb, but now and then they have ventured into the open with a timid protest—unless, like Morel, they happen to be in prison for speaking the truth. . . .[1]

[1] Morel was arrested on 31st August, 1917, on the pretext of having transgressed a decree of the Censor, and condemned to six months imprisonment. (Cf. H. Lutz, *E. D. Morel, der Mann und sein Werk*, Berlin, 1925, p. 48.) His sufferings in prison certainly contributed to his early death.

But one thing is certain : Many Englishmen who have fought against our African troops are ashamed that people do not shrink from throwing dirt at their brave opponents. They have often found it hard enough to lead black armies against their comrades of yesterday, against their colleagues in a great work of civilization. I venture to prophesy that the figure of General von Lettow-Vorbeck will one day be clothed in the same legendary grandeur in the enemy annals of this war, as in our own.

We have every interest in submitting the whole British dossier of German atrocities to an international commission of investigation after the war—but even to-day we dare not sit still. . . .

If the British Government takes it upon itself to demand the right of self-determination for the natives in the German colonies, I should like here and now to give notice of the counter-claim that a referendum be held in Ceylon [1] on the continuance of British rule. I am as sure of the result as I am of the result of a referendum in India and in Singapore, where there has also been a terrible regime of blood in operation during the war. That we are dealing here not with isolated phenomena but with a fundamental revolution in Britain's conception of her duties and methods as a colonial power towards both coloured and white men is proved by fundamental decisions which have been taken at Westminster. I need refer only to the unscrupulous employment of coloured troops in the European theatre of war. In this respect Britain has dropped more and more into the wake of the French. Britain has not yet applied conscription

[1] The *Manchester Guardian* of 2nd November, 1917, published a short extract on the measures taken by the local British authorities for the suppression of the disturbances in Ceylon in the spring of 1915. These disturbances, which really originated in religious quarrels between Moors and Sinhalese, were misrepresented as a rebellion against the British dominion and a merciless penal procedure was instituted. Long after everything was quiet Sinhalese were shot without any manner of trial. In none of the cases of execution investigated could a legal justification, even on the basis of martial law, be set up. Punitive expeditions marched round the country, fell on small villages and worked such arbitrary havoc among the population that the official report itself declared that the Government Commissioner appears to have interpreted his instructions as an order to introduce lynch law in his district and permission to behave with his patrol in a manner suggesting penny horribles from the Wild West. The significant part of the whole business is that the officials responsible for these massacres suffered no punishment beyond their suspension from their duties as Justices of the Peace, in spite of their ' disgusting and repulsive conduct,' as the report calls it.

to her coloured subjects, but already forced levies are being held, and one of the dominating figures in Lloyd George's cabinet, Winston Churchill, the "strategist," still looks to the ruthless enslavement of the coloured population in the service of Britain's military aims to bring about a decision in the European theatre of war. Was it in horrible mockery of the mentality of present-day Britain that General Smuts said a few months ago: "Only fair play, justice and the common Christian virtues can form the basis of our relations with the black population?"

The British used to apply, in my view rightly, a second touchstone to the moral right of a nation to be a colonial power: that was its conception of the white man's relation to the natives and of its duties to white sister nations. This test also results in a moral debacle for present-day Britain. The dignity of the white race in Africa was betrayed with unprecedented cynicism, and the entire foundation of Europe's educative mission was thereby undermined. I recall the flogging of Germans in front of blacks and by blacks and the expulsion of our missions, which was often carried out with a refinement of cruelty and humiliation. Here again we are dealing not with the isolated misdemeanours of inferiors beyond the reach of supervision, but with the methodical application of a war policy with the ultimate object that it shall continue to operate after the war.

To the same object a third principle of civilized colonial policy was sacrificed, a principle which Britain had formerly regarded as essential to the moral justification of colonial power. Sir Harry Johnston wrote before the war:

"Only because British trade policy has so far been so gloriously fair and free towards the whole world, in all the British possessions, has the rest of the world made no particular complaint that a population of only some forty millions in the north-west of Europe should have presumed to claim dominion over the best parts of Africa, Asia, Australia and America. But a reversal of this policy would one day, in my opinion, unite all the other great trading powers of the world in a league against us."

Well, this is the stage matters have reached! British trade policy has in fact been revolutionized. The England whose sons could use such proud language is to-day impotent. Till now British sovereignty in an oversea territory has been accepted all over the world as a guarantee of the legal security of person and property. The German merchant in particular was almost as happy, in confidence in Britain's commercial honour

and in the fairness of her jurisdiction, to invest his industry, his brains and his capital in colonial undertakings in territory under British suzerainty as under German. As late as the beginning of the war many of our merchants were ready to swear that their property would be safe in England's keeping during the war. It has proved otherwise. The German merchant and the whole world have been taught a rude lesson. The liquidation of German property in the British colonies has been carried out with a ruthlessness without precedent, and valuable assets have been wiped out of existence; the advantage taken of the "Trading with the Enemy" Act to escape from commercial obligations, the destruction of ledgers after they had been thoroughly ransacked for business secrets, all under the mask of an authoritative inspection, has shown us how the Government now in power in Britain is in fact fighting this war for the destruction of German trade. Lloyd George himself was frank enough to admit it the other day.

I am fully conscious that while our enemies remain in this state of mind the desire and the hope for a common effort to build up the colonial future and re-create precious ideals which have perished, remain utopian. What faces us is war in peace-time, in other words, so far as Africa is concerned, the existing system of jealous rivalry between the colonial powers under which the development of the productive forces of the country and the ascent of the natives is naturally and necessarily paralyzed. Under these conditions Africa will not help to assure the lasting peace which we all long for; on the contrary it will continue to bristle with dangerous points of friction at which a new world conflagration may blaze up only too easily.

But that is not the future of Africa about which I am going to speak this evening. To paint the picture of Africa which rises before my eyes I need brighter and kindlier colours. The unpleasant and pessimistic thoughts which the attitude of Britain during the war almost forces upon us I refuse to make my own. I refuse to look at things in this way, because no peace is conceivable with the mentality which controls Britain to-day. It is childish to imagine that Germany could sit down at the conference table with these bellicose bruisers, with these exponents of the "game-dog spirit." We need a return in all countries to the highest aspirations of the past, and I venture to call that man an incorrigible pessimist who does not believe in the possibility of such a return in Britain: the change of heart must and will come! For the "knock-out-blow" politicians can only maintain themselves on one con-

dition, and that condition is that they fulfil their promise to bring us to our knees on the battlefield and dictate a British peace to the German people! We may have to fight for a long time before all the illusions which belong to the arsenal of this "knock-out-blow" policy have collapsed, but collapse they will! . . .

And so when I go on to sketch the future of Africa as I think of it and as Germany must desire it for the sake not only of Germany but of humanity, I always take it for granted that before the war ends all nations will own the sway of that spirit without which neither the new Europe nor the new Africa can be built up.

The new Africa must rise on the foundations of the understanding to be reached in the peace treaties between the European states concerned. But the new partition must not be the only product of the common endeavour of these states; in addition to the partition of territory there is room for such common endeavour in two directions. In the first place the one-sidedness of territorial sovereignty within the boundaries of this or that area can be mitigated by the imposition on the protecting power of restrictions securing equal respect for the interests of other states. And secondly, if certain great problems which concern the whole of Africa are to be solved, steps must be taken to secure the co-operation of all the protecting powers and to lay down guiding lines to regulate this co-operation. In both respects all we have to do is to carry on what was begun long ago. The last partition of Africa was initiated by the Congo Agreement, which was brought about under the auspices of Bismarck in Berlin. Free trade in Central Africa, freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger systems, the combating of the slave trade and the neutralization of the Congo basin—these are the great objects for which the Congo Agreement attempted, in bold outline, to devise an international regulation. Other treaties which united the powers in a common effort to suppress slavery and the sale of alcohol and firearms followed the Congo Agreement. Germany has collaborated with perfect loyalty on this far-reaching system of international treaties and spared no pains to enforce it strictly. The attempt to preserve the neutrality of the Congo Basin during the world war has, as you know, come to grief by the will of our enemies. Before the war it had become clearer and clearer that international regulation must be applied to still further problems facing the different European nations who live side by side on the African continent. Here I am thinking

above all of the laying out of great common routes of traffic through the possessions of different powers as well as of the combating of dangerous epidemics such as sleeping sickness. We desire, taking our stand on the international treaties, to make further progress in both these directions and also to play our part in the creation of institutions which will guarantee the observance of our agreements. As time goes on, the territory included in such a system of treaties must gradually assume the character of a common colony of the European states, in which the possessors of the individual territories become trustees for the entire organization. The prospect of such a development will not find us wavering in the attitude I have indicated. . . .

Let us summarize the results of these reflections on the future of the African continent. Africa will continue after the world war to be in the hands of a number of European colonial powers. But the new partition which we demand will provide that the shares of the individual powers are adapted to their economic interests and to their economic and cultural capacity. . . . Every means must be taken to secure that the militarization of natives shall remain foreign to Africa. If we succeed in giving effect to these demands, the conditions for the prosperous development of Africa and its inhabitants in the coming decades are assured. Then Europe's best forces can and will take up this great burden of civilized humanity with the assurance of success. Then the individual races of Africa which have vegetated for thousands of years in the shadow of history will be guided by patient educative work to the light of our civilization and material culture. Then the slumbering economic treasures of these rich lands will be brought forth by the methods of European science, technique and organization, to the benefit of the native population, to the benefit of the rest of the world. Then Africa will take its proper place among the continents. We Germans feel ourselves called upon to shoulder a goodly part of this immense burden.'

My speech was delivered at the opening meeting of the Upper Chamber of Baden on 14th December, 1917. After some introductory sentences I said :

'. . . The name of Cambrai will ring proudly but sadly in the history of Baden. . . . Out there we have seen the growth of a generation which is hard on itself. But it ill befits those who stay at home to harden their hearts against the sufferings of the

fighting men. They are keeping the horrors of the battle away from our country ; but we must not keep them from our minds ; we must never for a moment forget the unspeakable toil and suffering of which that living wall which protects us is built. Our men are taking upon themselves day by day a load that nobody before the war would have believed human strength able to bear. When they come home they must find here no dullness or superficiality, but a power of sympathy, such as goes to meet them—so much we can claim—here in Baden, and such as can alone build a bridge between home and front. The endurance of our troops in the West has enabled commanders of genius to win the successes of Riga and Oesel and in conjunction with our brave allies the victory in Venetia. . . .

At present we are watching our enemies' secret plans of plunder being shown up to the whole world by the disclosures in the Russian archives.

The Landtag meets at a memorable moment. For the first time in three long years the representatives of an enemy Great Power are requesting a direct exchange of views and wish to ascertain whether the differences between her and us have not so far vanished that negotiations can bridge them over. The Russian revolution is turning the catchwords of the West into a grim reality and its implacable pacifism is recoiling on those who have so cunningly endeavoured to combine lip service to pacifism with a policy of violent conquest.

From our Western enemies there comes a fresh declaration of war. They will have no peace by negotiation but still seek a decision on the battlefield. In the most recent speeches of Lloyd George, Clemenceau and President Wilson the Knock-out policy, the policy of a crushing defeat, is once more affirmed. This policy became the programme of the British Government a year ago. And now the campaign of 1918 is to see it carried into effect. In these circumstances it is heartening to look back and observe how our enemies' hopes were fulfilled in 1917. The British and French aimed in their spring offensives at forcing a concentric breach in our lines. The summer and autumn offensives had a more limited objective—to reach the German submarine base.

Then it was triumphantly proclaimed that for the first time in the history of this war Germany's initiative had been paralyzed.

The battle of Cambrai was a fresh attempt to break through the Hindenburg line. Like all its predecessors it has failed.

And yet another high hope of our enemies has come to

nought. They thought they observed a cleavage between Government and people in Germany and hoped to be able to drive in a wedge which would pierce our home front.

This stroke miscarried. It showed scant respect for the peculiar character of the German people and its right of self-determination.

As against their disappointments our enemies have one success to their credit which we must frankly admit. They have conducted their political campaign against our good name with a colossal output of slander and of false suggestion, and they have succeeded in hammering one obsession after another into their peoples. The foremost place is still regularly given to the assertion that the democratic peoples of the Entente sprang voluntarily to arms to ward off an unprovoked attack by an autocratic Germany on the freedom of the world. That is the corner-stone of our enemies' moral offensive. I therefore regard it as the duty of every man who speaks in a responsible position to-day to accept the challenge on this issue and summon our accusers before the bar. In this encounter it is our good conscience that is at stake. I must therefore, gentlemen, beg your indulgence if I now repeat what has long been known to you. I will content myself with quoting a few facts from the period immediately before the outbreak of the war. Those fateful days have proved an infallible test of the honesty of the Western Governments, with their gospel of Democracy. It was then that it appeared whether the nations were free or a plaything in the hands of their Governments.

At the end of July 1914 the popular will in France was behind Jean Jaurès in his demand that France should throw all her weight into the scale of peace. Jean Jaurès was murdered by order of the war-mongers. The French people were now in a rebellious mood; but the Government succeeded in gaining the upper hand by publishing Germany's proclamation of a state of danger of war while it kept the general mobilization in Russia secret. Information derived from British sources shows how the necessary German act of defence against Russia was thus made to appear an act of aggression against France. Then the French people naturally turned from the enemy at home to protect their threatened country. Such was the origin of the French people's will to war. It was forged.[1]

[1] It would pay to collect all the lies and dissimulations employed in the last days of July by the Russian Government with their Sovereign and by the French and British Governments with their unwilling peoples to bring about the war (the suppression of the Russian mobilization order in

The British people was just as helpless in face of its Government at the decisive hour. It never imagined that Grey held in his hand the infallible means of preserving the peace of the world. All he needed to do was to add to his warning to Russia on 25th July, not to wreck the diplomatic negotiations by a general mobilization, the words which were spoken at the instance of Bethmann Hollweg in Vienna on 30th July : " We decline to be drawn into a world conflagration through our allies disregarding our advice," [1] and he would have saved the peace of the world. Instead of this St. Petersburg was allowed to count on the certainty that England would march at Russia's side whether her advice were listened to or not. Only thus was the war party in Russia enabled to get the better of the peace party.

The British people did not know that its hands were tied. But Russia and France knew it.

To-day, after the Suchomlinof trial,[2] it costs the French and British Governments an effort to maintain the pose of injured innocence before their peoples. But now, once more, after three years of war, the President of the United States takes up the legend of the unprovoked attack, once more he musters all the obsolete Entente battle-cries of 1914 and proclaims a crusade, in the name of humanity, freedom and the rights of the small nations, against Germany as the disturber of the peace. [3]

These are great names, and we must not be under any illusion ; they are appealing to the idealism of millions.

Here again I think it would be wrong for us to yield to our inclination and decline to reply to this grave charge, trusting to the verdict of posterity.

I would ask the President of the United States what right he has to put himself forward as judge of the world ?

President Wilson has no right to do battle in the name of humanity. For it was he who tolerated the conversion of a large portion of the peace industry of America into factories of

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Paris and London, deception of the Tsar regarding the facts of the mobilization). Cf. Max Montgelas, ' Nachtraege zu den Mobilmachungen des Jahres 1914,' *Die Deutsche Nation*, No. 9, September 1919. The intention was to convey the impression at all costs that the Allies were the attacked party and Germany alone the aggressor. The Peace of Versailles is built on this lie ; and the unprecedented effort of the Allies in the war cannot be explained without it.

[1] See above p. 40.

[2] Cf. W. A. Suchomlinof, *Erinnerungen*, Berlin, 1924.

[3] Address to Congress, 4th December, 1917.

death, at a time when America was still at peace with Germany. This formal right to supply munitions to our enemies he has punctiliously maintained, while he surrendered without a struggle America's human right to provide for our non-combatants, especially the weak and the sick. President Wilson has further allowed America's charge of our prisoners of war in Russia to be administered in a slack and heartless fashion.[1] Under the old regime in Russia thousands of our prisoners of war perished miserably, with no recourse on the part of America to the enormous pressure she could have applied to force an improvement. In France, too, America looked on while popular cruelty inflicted every imaginable torture and infamy on our fellow-countrymen. President Wilson has no right to speak in the name of democracy and freedom, since he was the powerful helper of Tsarist Russia and turned a deaf ear to the appeal of the Russian democracy to be allowed to discuss terms of peace, or at least not be ordered to the offensive, so that it might be able to consolidate its freedom.

President Wilson has no right to do battle in the name of the small nations, since the alien peoples which were threatened with extinction under the Russian tyranny, the Finns, the Poles, the Ukrainians, the Balts, the Lithuanians, have turned to him in vain over and over again ; while Greece, too,[2] appealed

[1] Cf. Brändström, *op. cit.* p. 5 : ' The personal antipathy of the American Ambassador then in St. Petersburg against the Germans had an influence on the American relief work. The great respect enjoyed by an Ambassador of the United States would have enabled him to induce the Russian Government to adopt from the beginning a treatment of prisoners in accordance with the recognized principles of international law. *Unfortunately the Ambassador remained entirely passive*, and this naturally had an effect on his subordinates. There were many among them, *e.g.*, the Consul General in Moscow and the Consul in Odessa, who took a warm interest in their work but could not help adopting the same attitude as the Ambassador on the main question. The American delegates in general had the peculiar idea that they were Russia's guests and must therefore not criticize.' (The italics are mine.)

[2] Cf. Caracciolo, *L'Intervento della Grecia nella guerra mondiale*, (Maglione e Strini, Roma), p. 185 f. : ' Let us note that the king had not violated the Constitution and that the Powers on the other hand did it twice, both by the arbitrary act of the forced abdication of the king and by preventing the legitimate successor from mounting the throne ; but this has since been amply proved.' Ebray, *Aveux sur la question grecque* (Edition ' Atar,' Genève), p. 89 : ' When the impartial verdict of history is given on the Franco-British proceedings in Greece, it would be surprising if it did not see in it an unexampled attack on the independence and the dignity of a people,—and what is more of one of these small

vainly for his protection, when she was being robbed of her national independence by America's allies.

But do not let us deceive ourselves on this point: the American people really believes that the war must go on in order to make all these great ideals safe. For the tragic fact of this world war is that for the wide American public Europe is, historically, psychologically and politically, an undiscovered continent. Every attempt at enlightenment is being stifled, every stirring of independent thought tyrannically suppressed. For this purpose, as Lord Northcliffe has just admiringly related, the American Government employs a system of police espionage which is said to work even more efficiently than the Russian Ochrana.

And so the democratic watchword has become on the lips of the Western allies a huge lie. *Vox populi vox dei*, say the Western demagogues, blaspheming both their God

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peoples for which the Entente pretended to be fighting—at the same time as they were loudly proclaiming the right of peoples to self-determination. . . . The legal aspect of the question can now be summed up as follows: It is proved that the facts on which the Entente based its claim to violate Greek territory were non-existent.' S. Cosmin, *L'Entente et la Grèce* (Société mutuelle d'édition, Paris, 1926), Vol. II., p. 483: 'It results from the documents reproduced and the facts recorded here that the way in which this business was presented to the world at the time was the most hideous imposture of the Great War and the most fanatical lie of modern times.' The decisive documents are very completely reproduced in Edouard Driault and Michel Lhéritier, *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours* (Les Presses Universitaires de France, Paris). Cf. further Paxton Hibben, *Constantine I. and the Greek People* (The Century Co., 1920, New York), p. xv.: 'What is of great consequence, however, is that during the war and after our entry into it as an ally of France and Great Britain, without our knowledge and consent the constitution of a little, but a brave and fine, people was nullified by the joint action of two of our allies; the neutrality of a small country was violated, the will of its people set at naught, its laws broken, its citizens persecuted, its Press muzzled.' The whole book bears witness to King Constantine, that he—'sincere democrat, leader and comrade of his people, brave and able soldier, loyal friend, devoted patriot and generous, open-hearted man,' as he was,—acted towards the Entente as well as towards the other side in a correct and unobjectionable manner and yielded to the Allies' threat of force against the will of his people, which worshipped him, in order to save his people the harshest measures of coercion on the part of the Allies. In their choice of means of terrorism the Entente did not pick and choose; members of the Greek Royal family have told me that there is no question that the burning of the wood in the middle of which lay the Royal palace of Tatoi was instigated by the French. The loyalty of a soldier and his own exact knowledge of the locality just saved the king from the ring of flames. The castle was burned down.

and their people. They are like heathen priests, who do not fear to cheat their god because they do not really believe in him.

If I do not admit the shadow of a claim on the side of our enemies to sit as judges, this does not mean that we should be uncritical with ourselves. In Germany—we know it—we have had our time of unfreedom; but it never lay in the institutions of the German Empire; rather it lay in a certain mental attitude among broad masses of the German people.

Our enemies speak of authorities who force their will on a reluctant people, and assume the really grotesque rôle of wishing to free the German people from these tyrants. At this we can only laugh. Our error lay rather in the over-readiness of many Germans to face the authorities in an indolent spirit with no strong desire to be themselves responsible for the cause of their country.

Only too often in the years before the war we used to meet the self-satisfied individualism which nursed itself at the expense of the State and criticized with no will to help. Many of the best men stood apart from political life because they had no taste for its weapons. But the German people needs the sacrifice of its best men in the common cause in peace as well as in war. Plato's claim is truer to-day than ever: *that he who would help his people must unite power of thought with the will to act.*

It is true that our people, on its side, has failed to create the atmosphere in which leaders easily develop. The cheap award of popular favour which exalts brilliance and cleverness at the expense of efficiency and sincerity is indeed not a thing to be imitated. I feel sure that this danger does not exist in Germany; there are strong guarantees against demagogy in the German character.[1] But it is equally certain that leadership languishes under the dead weight of envy and belittlement. In the years before the war we often saw a lack of that devotion and loyalty which bear a leader up and enable him to grow above himself.

But the war has been a great awakener. It has stirred up the hidden powers of the people everywhere, and all the submerged possibilities of our history have risen to the surface anew. Out at the front our countrymen have grown conscious of how many and how various are the powers which combine to create Power.

[1] An error. Since the revolution the guarantees have grown weaker and weaker.

Our nation in arms will one day come home with braced strength and a braced sense of right.

The great common will which has arisen in the field justifies high hopes of Germany's future. The spirit of our political reformers, the spirit of Stein and Hardenberg is rising from the German past with warning and promise. Whether this promise comes to fulfilment will depend on the character of our people and on it alone. In these days of muddled jargon it should be said, and said with emphasis, that institutions alone cannot guarantee a people's freedom. There is only one real guarantee, and that is the character of the people itself. But of this there can be no doubt, that the longer the war lasts, the harder will be the revival. And not only with us, but in the enemy countries too. There, too, it is the best who are falling. Who can find matter for rejoicing in this? It may even happen that Europe can no longer summon up the healing power necessary to close her awful wounds.

It looks to-day as if the war must go on till Europe is utterly exhausted. Such is the will of America and also the will of the French and British Governments. They flout those universal human ideals because they see in them the pillars on which the great bridge between the peoples could be built.

Lloyd George will not hear of a commercial peace. He gives the destruction of German commerce a foremost place among British war aims and rejects the freedom of the seas. Clemenceau, regardless of the former American programme, will have nothing to do with a "League of Nations" for the avoidance of future wars, and Lord Northcliffe refers to President Wilson as his bosom ally. President Wilson wants to Americanize not, it is true, German territory, but the German soul.

These are pronouncements whose meaning cannot be twisted. But we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by Clemenceau and Lloyd George. The unity behind their fronts of which they speak does not exist. In France as well as in Britain there are forces at work which desire not a peace of violence but only a peace which can be reconciled with the honour and safety of their country. The real strength of these forces has been betrayed to us by none other than the enemy Ministers themselves. Why otherwise should Clemenceau threaten all adherents of a peace of understanding with court-martial? Why otherwise should Lloyd George introduce the terrorism of the censorship into the very Parliament of Britain? Of this there can be no doubt, that a temper is growing in the

enemy countries of which the war-mongers are afraid. Its representatives are potential holders of power. But neither must we be under any illusion. For the present these men are condemned to political impotence and may remain so for a long time.

This being so our duty is a twofold one. We must first rally all our national forces for the hard fight which still lies before us, and at the same time we must strive to make clear to ourselves in what spirit we, in contrast to the enemy Governments, are determined to approach the final settlement. If we desire to make this clear, we must not fight shy of a clash of opinion in Germany. It would be a false and illusory truce of God to damp down the conflict between opposing views of life which is unavoidable even in time of war, and drive it underground. A real truce of God demands, however, that we must not carry on our disputes in a spirit of contempt and exasperation. We know, gentlemen, that with good will this can be accomplished. When on the first of August 1914 our Kaiser could utter the liberating words : " I know no parties, I only know Germans," a high point in German history was indisputably reached. Behind us lay decades of the bitterness and misery of party strife. We have recently to our sorrow had to witness the same spectacle again, and see Germans fighting each other with the weapons in use before the war. But the memory of that great liberating sense of community which we experienced in the earliest months of the war calls to us to-day, and calls urgently, to repeat the words of the Kaiser and give them their real meaning : " Parties indeed there are, but they are all German."

Gentlemen, I am nearing the end. To-day an awful responsibility rests on those who have to guide the fortunes of a nation. All those who with quick senses and burning hearts are passing through the war at home must help to bear this burden. The healing forces are everywhere listening for each other ; everywhere men are growing weary of the moratorium on the Sermon on the Mount. Humanity longs for notice of its repeal even before the war ends. Sir William Byles, that true Christian who died the other day, when he coined this awful phrase, a " moratorium on the Sermon on the Mount,"[1] was thinking not of the unavoidable horrors of the battlefield but of the heathenish attitude of mind in which so many men of outstanding intellect in all countries almost prided themselves in war time.

[1] In the House of Commons, 26th May, 1916.

This brutalization of war must stop even before the war ends. And here again we can follow the lead of the best spirit in our army. In the eyes of a Christian soldier the Red Cross spirit belongs to the army as much as the spirit of attack. In his eyes the man who does not risk everything to destroy a fighting enemy is no greater a traitor than the man who does not spare a defenceless enemy. Similar voices are coming to-day from Britain, telling us how British clergymen have been taught by the soldiers in the trenches that respect for the enemy which the dictatorship of the Yellow Press does not tolerate at home. It was this spirit, too, which gave rise to the Hague Convention for the Exchange of Prisoners. That Convention has not yet been fully carried out ; it still needs supplementing and imitation.

In the appeal of the " Information and Assistance Bureau for Germans abroad and for Foreigners in Germany " there is a sentence which I should like to quote here : " Even in war to love your enemy is the mark of loyalty to the Lord." And I would add : It is also the mark of loyalty to Germany.

It has been held that hatred is necessary to the energetic prosecution of the war. The German Crown Princess has given the answer : " Love of country is enough to make a man give his best."

Power alone cannot assure us the place in the world which in our opinion belongs to us. The sword cannot strike down the moral obstacles which have risen against us. " If the world is to be reconciled to the greatness of our power it must feel that there is a world conscience behind our strength." I agree with this opinion. To satisfy this demand, we need only throw open the gates of our innermost being, for a sense of responsibility to humanity shines through the whole spiritual history of Germany. Let Germany be of good cheer and inscribe this sign on her standards. In this sign we shall conquer ! '

I had a peculiar feeling during my speech. The nearer I came to the end, the stronger grew my hope that I was not only speaking for myself but was giving expression to a longing of my people which had so far found no voice, the longing for right, power, and peace.

Dr. Solf's speech and mine revealed a broad basis of common opinion in Germany. The Government needed only to take its stand on this basis in order to close the breach

which had threatened since Erzberger's peace resolution to rend the people in two.

On one side there was the Fatherland Party representing the idea of might regardless of moral restrictions, and on the other side the Majority in the Reichstag which, as matters stood, appeared to thousands to have bowed its head before the foreign enemy. The Supreme Command looked rather to the Fatherland Party. Briey and Longwy were neither the bond nor the line of division ; the Generals welcomed on the one side and missed on the other the note of national passion which a fighting army needs to feel behind it.

Among those who expressed their agreement to Dr. Solf and myself were Pan-Germans and leading members of the Reichstag Majority. The feeling penetrated as far as the Social Democrats that it was our duty to take up arms against the enemy's slanders, and there were many in the Fatherland Party who were capable of enthusiasm for the ideal of right if only it was not put forward in a tone of despondency.

The Supreme Command, I heard, approved my speech. From the Kaiser, to whom I had sent it with a covering note, I received the following letter, dated 28th December, 1917 :

> ' Dear Cousin !
>
> I thank you heartily for your interesting notes on the leading ideas of your Karlsruhe speech and am glad to be able to agree with you in all essentials. I, too, am convinced that the monarchy is called upon by Fate so to guide and so to utilize the immense revolution this war is bringing about even in the internal outlook of the different nations that it may emerge from the war strengthened rather than weakened ; and I also agree with you that this can only happen if proof is given of that far-reaching confidence which will awaken the very best forces in the nation and make them rally gladly round the Crown.'

The former Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann Hollweg, on the 17th December, 1917, expressed his sympathy in impulsive and cordial language :

> ' May I tell Your Highness with what heartfelt emotion I read your great speech in the Upper Chamber, the complete text of which has just reached me. I hope that the friendliness

which Your Highness has shown me for many years and the sincere personal respect in which I have always held you gives me the right to say so. Your Highness will understand the need I feel to express my thanks when I hear language which gives really classic form to ideas in which I recognize my own convictions, ideas for which I, too, have fought and in which perhaps lay the real ground of the hatred and enmity which I had to face —the real ground of the great antagonism which decided those who are all-powerful in the Empire to bring about my fall. Your words of reason as opposed to madness, of the moral conscience as opposed to falsehood—wherever these malign powers rage, whether among our enemies or here at home—are a deed which our people and the history of mankind will always remember to your honour. For your appeal is to the forces which are essentially German and have made Germany what she is—to forces which for a generation had been in danger and are still in danger of being corrupted into a parvenu imperialism. I at least have never been able to convince myself that the great line which is best indicated by the names of Luther, Goethe and Bismarck—the much misunderstood Bismarck—ought ever to lead up to the goal which derives its name from the shining lights of Pan-Germanism. Nor can I resist the feeling, in spite of the growing degradation of our daily Press, that the ideas which you have expressed are steadily gaining ground. Even six months ago a speech like yours would hardly have been possible. At the same time it must certainly be admitted that the hybris which caught our people in the very first weeks of the war, and the international hatred which has been whipped up over and over again by the impudent lies of our enemies, and which as regularly supplied certain circles in Germany with their fuel, were and are forces only to be overcome gradually, if the common cause were not to suffer. And now come the negotiations with Russia. For me they confirm what I have long thought I saw coming, namely, that this war, which is devouring the masses of the nations, will not come to its real end until the pressure of these same masses makes itself felt. Many old illusions are perishing in the process. But it is my conviction that we can only do justice to the tasks of the new age which, like all great things, are beset with great dangers, if we have the courage to put from us what was but illusion, and equally courageously recognize the real force which is emerging out of the world chaos. Only thus can we avoid catastrophe and carry safely over from the old order into the new whatever can still be saved.

Your Highness will bear with these frank opinions. Your words have revived them ; and if, in anything I have said I deviate from what you think the right line, there remains, I hope, a common basis of thought between us. . . .'

I set special value on an expression of opinion from Friedrich Meinecke :

'It is not only the spirit of the August days of 1914 that speaks in the high-minded address of Prince Max of Baden ; it lifts us to a higher level of national thought and conscience. Through unceasing struggle and conflict we move to unending reconciliation and concord. The wonderful union of all the national forces and feelings which we saw in those August days is at an end ; problems of our political future hitherto undreamt of, and stern pressure from outside, have once more divided the nation. Here we are shown how we, ripened as we are by experience and self-questioning, could once more close our ranks if only we could still the passions of the party struggle which is going on among us. To-day, as the Prince says, we must unite power of thought with the will to act. To-day, indeed, when we are compelled to put forth our last ounce of energy, there is no lack among us of the will to act. But a misguided thought often threatens to lead us in the wrong direction. For it looks for the sources of national power—which we all long for and are determined to fight for—too much in external, material, palpable success ; and neglects the inner forces which flow from the character of the nation and its sense of community, from freedom, morality and humanity. The demand of the Prince that we shall foster these forces is to-day the demand of true political realism and statesmanship.'

Friedrich Naumann, in the *Hilfe* of 27th December, 1917, read my speech exactly as I had intended :

'No one who follows the inner development of the German spirit in the war with adequate sympathy and knowledge will undervalue the speech which Prince Max, the Heir to the Throne of Baden, delivered last week at the opening of the Upper Chamber of the Baden Landtag. Its importance lies not in the fact that it ushered in entirely new lines of thought, but in the fact that a representative of the monarchical system comes forward in person to protest against the intellectual

tyranny of Pan-Germanism, and plead for those ideas which have always been genuinely German and which, in spite of all the threats of the jingoes, will remain German.

. . . Ask Lessing or Kant, Goethe, Herder or Schiller, go to Fichte, Schleiermacher or Hegel, turn to Freiherr von Stein or to one of the Humboldts, and you will always find a Germany that stands for more than a craze for conquest. In this fine old Germany the power to deal the defensive blow was united with the shining idea. A host of jingoes may be tired of hearing of this high-minded Germany; yet it remains true that only by this spirit have we become a nation. So long as we outrage the whole world with the national particularism urged on us by the Fatherland Party, we can neither hold our own people together, nor maintain our alliances, nor persuade the small nations on our borders willingly to throw in their lot with us, nor renew peace with an estranged world. The rude impact of war may explain, and the vile slanders of our enemies may go far to excuse the exaggerations of a patriotism on the defensive; but the German people cannot go on for ever having its German spirit driven out of it in the name of victory, especially as nothing imperils a real victory more than just this driving out of the spirit. An appeal from some exalted quarter for introspection and inner renewal was needed.

Such was Prince Max of Baden's aim; and he has had a large measure of success. "We think pretty much as the Prince does!" is being said to-day in the most diverse quarters. In the great newspapers this is perhaps not sufficiently evident, for in them the events of the day claim all the interest. But he who has an ear for the breathing of the spirit feels that the close of the year, which brings with it a foreboding of the dawn of peace on earth, is also bringing a certain clarity into German thought.'

This was the agreement of one who understood; along with it there came an expression of friendly approval against which I had to be on my guard. In it every word with a pacifist sound was torn from the context of the speech and underlined.

I refer to an article by Prince Alexander Hohenlohe in the *Neue Zuericher Zeitung*, of which he sent me a copy.[1] He also sent me with a note of special commendation a copy of the *Basler Nationalzeitung*[2] which made out an antagonism

[1] 'A right word at the right time' (29th December, 1917).

[2] 'Good words from Karlsruhe' (18th December, 1917).

between the German North and South, between Hohenzollern and Zaehringen, between the Crown Prince and myself. Count Hertling was censured for having said with reference to the origin of the war, that Germany's conscience was clean ; but the comments on my speech suppressed the fact that I had made a much sharper attack on the enemy's war guilt legend than the Chancellor.

Prince Alexander Hohenlohe was a friend of peace who lived and worked in Switzerland. His patriotism cannot be called in question ; but he was one of those German pacifists who without intending it fell victims to neutral suggestion. They were a motley group. There was a ' praeceptor Germaniae,' a schoolmaster writ large, who thought it would be a good thing for Germany's materialistic soul if the war did not end too favourably. There were men who were intoxicated by the milk of human kindness, to whose eyes tears of emotion would rise at the sound of the English word ' humanity ' or the French ' humanité.' What they wanted was peace at any price. If the Entente appeared invincible and inexorable, well, Germany must just be pressed all the harder to give in. There was one man who had once been a very keen representative of the armament industry, but had become a pacifist and was now bent on making amends by publicly acknowledging a guilt on Germany's part that was imaginary or absurdly exaggerated. With this group the emissaries of Wilson got into touch at an early period. They included confidential agents and also honest disciples, who like Herron were ready to pledge their honour not only for the good will of the Prophet but also for his power to carry it into effect. There were also sober observers of the international situation among these German pacifists, but in general it could be said of them that they saw the mote in our eye but not the beam in the eye of the other people.

In my reply to Prince Alexander Hohenlohe I went out of my way to shock him by my incredulity towards the phrases of the Entente. I also wanted in the interest of the future to avoid being extolled in Switzerland, at the expense of official Germany, as an opponent of the Belgian policy of the Chan-

cellor. This was bound to give rise to distrust and opposition on the part of the Kaiser, the Supreme Command and the Chancellor, all of whom had up till now taken up a friendly or at least not a hostile attitude to the line which I was following.

It never occurred to me that this private letter, written in some annoyance, would one day become a Press sensation.

The letter ran : [1]

' Many thanks for your last letter (which I could only acknowledge by telegram), and for kindly sending me your interesting and very flattering article. It's very strange about that speech of mine. I thought I was saying what was obvious, and speaking—apart from our enemies—without offence or favour. And now my words are having an echo at home and abroad that startles me. What can the Germans be thinking and what can foreigners be thinking of Germany ! I am quite alarmed. The Swiss papers are making out an antagonism between Hohenzollern and Zaehringen—a piece of utter humbug if you read the telegram the Kaiser sent me (this between ourselves), in which he calls my speech a " deed " [2] and congratulates me on the fine and lofty ideas contained in it. The Pan-Germans are falling on me, although I am giving them the German spirit to help the German sword, the spirit with which they can make all the world conquests they wish ; and the papers of the Left, especially the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a paper I have no love for, are praising me through a brick wall, although my denunciation of the *democratic watchword* and the clap-trap of party dialectics, especially the word parliamentarism, is clear enough. " The world is out of joint and people's minds out of balance."

The craziness [?] which has been worked up in these people makes it simply impossible for them to read its plain meaning into a word of solid common sense, of seriously intended practical Christianity, and of a human conscience free from sentimentality. They must first trail it through the slough of

[1] I am compelled to give the letter here in the form in which it was published in the *Freie Zeitung* of Berne in October 1918 (*Vorwaerts*, 15th October, 1918). At the same time I should not like to guarantee that every single expression is authentic ; on the contrary I must say that one or two phrases are foreign to my recollection.

[2] This appears to be a slip. It is in Bethmann Hollweg's letter (p. 194) that the speech is called a ' deed ' [Tr.].

their silly minds and distort it to fit their low ideas. It makes me proud of my Badeners. They know that I am not, cannot be, and will not be a party man ; and so they have understood me from Right to Left and every man of them has taken from my words the lesson he would like to take to heart. I have long felt the need of going for our enemies and ridiculing their affected pose as judges in the matter of war guilt and the gospel of democracy. And I wanted also to confront their heathenish behaviour with the Sermon on the Mount, and to use its Gospel of Love to throw a clear light on the strong man's duty to guard the rights of mankind ; for there is now a deplorable uncertainty and a sad confusion of ideas in regard to both matters. Our enemies, on their side, are garbling these sacred ideas by their lies and slanders and on the other hand we, under the lash of their vile machinations, are reacting to this provocation in a manner which sometimes appears to be devoid of reason. My stand for Christianity and the human conscience rests on my innermost convictions ; but there is also a practical consideration. For if we lay emphasis on these ideals, which in my opinion lie deeper in the German spirit and its inner nature than in that of the English and French, we have in our hands a weapon against the enemy propaganda of pacifism and humanitarianism, which, if you like, you can call a moral offensive. I do not deny that I dislike this consideration, for I have all along held that Christianity and charity should stand on their own feet and that too much should not be made of the profit they bring. But they *do* bring profit, and if it serves the cause of peace, it is serving a good cause. And so the beginning and end of the speech were determined by my onslaught on the enemy lies and propagandist insinuation, *i.e.*, what you may call the moral offensive. But if I was to deride the " democracy " of the Western Powers, I had to take account of our situation at home. Since I object to Western parliamentarism for Germany and Baden, I had to tell the people of Baden and of Germany that while I understand its needs, I can see no help in *institutions*. And thus I acquire a platform on which I can keep in my own hands the methods I wish to apply, and the people of Baden follow gladly because they feel that their anxieties and their needs are understood.

On the peace question my position was the same. I wished only to hint at the *spirit* in which we should approach this question in contrast to the powers that be in the West. I lay weight on the " how " because the " what " is so hard to determine, for *I, too, naturally wish that our successes should be*

exploited as far as possible, and far from agreeing with the so-called Peace Resolution, which was the misbegotten child of fear and of the Berlin dog days, I want the greatest possible compensations in some form or other, so that we may not become too poor after the war. In this matter my view is not, of course, on all fours with yours. For I am not yet in favour of saying more on Belgium than has been said already. The enemy know enough, and in dealing with so astute and wordly-wise an adversary as England, Belgium is the only pawn for compensations that we possess. It would be rather different if the presuppositions of a lasting peace already existed. But this is just where Lloyd George and Clemenceau have broken the bridges.

So there you have the author's own interpretation of my speech, which the Ministry has broadcasted as a pamphlet in a hundred thousand copies for public information ; I enclose six copies. Thank you again for all the kindness shown me in your article and your letters. In all this I have the feeling " d'avoir fait de la poésie sans le savoir." There is one thing I would like to add in regard to this. *The speech is a unity ; if you leave out the beginning, you misunderstand the end and vice versa.* I have a very poor opinion of the moral constitution of the men in power among our enemies and of the stupendous lack of judgment among their peoples. Here we have to fight against a meanness of spirit more shameful than anything that has ever been seen. Our sin on the other hand is stupidity, for Pan-Germans and Peace Resolutions are both alike stupid—at least in the guise which they assume. Apart from them there is meanness enough, even among us, but it is less conscious, less of a sin against the Holy Ghost. When we shall meet again I have no idea. Railway travelling is no longer any pleasure, especially in the cold weather. I hope the spring will see us together again. Till then, good-bye and hearty wishes from

Your truly devoted cousin,

MAX.'

Neither speech received much attention in the French, Italian or American Press. But in Britain both were rightly understood in moderate circles. What specially caught the attention of the *Nation* (12th January, 1918) in my speech was the challenge to Lloyd George :

' The Liberals, the Democrats, the reasonable Conservatives in Germany—in short, all those elements in the enemy coun-

tries upon a *rapprochement* with which the chances of a decent future for the world mainly rest—had begun to despair of an England in which Mr. Lloyd George should remain Prime Minister.'

There followed a detailed summary of my indictment of the judicial pose of the Entente, France's suppression of the Russian mobilization order, Britain's encouragement of the Russian war spirit, Wilson's negligent protection of our prisoners of war—it was all conscientiously reproduced, and the only comment was :

'We cannot accept his view of the facts, but it is important to realize that a man whose high principle and good faith are beyond question sincerely believes that the Entente is as guilty as Germany. And, finally : His speech is, in effect, the reply to Lord Lansdowne.'

CHAPTER II

BREST-LITOVSK

I BELIEVE that Friedrich Naumann and the *Nation* rightly recognized the ' breathing of the spirit ' that passed through Germany and the enemy countries about the turn of the year 1917. But in a few weeks the great business of war would begin again. If the new movement was to issue in political action, the Government must at once take the lead. For this it was given a unique opportunity.

On 22nd December, 1917, began the negotiations of Brest-Litovsk. The whole world listened. At Christmas the stifled longing for peace and good will to men was always stirring. Now the first peace was to be made. The trust of the alien races of Russia—liberated and once more threatened —went out to us as the Power that brought order and protection : ' You Germans are for us the rising sun ' was what they said then. Behind the Russian negotiators there spread a chaos of blood and filth.

Our power had never been greater. Even the enemy war-mongers were anxiously awaiting the decision which they had sought. Never had a German Government had such a platform on which to found our right to power before the whole world by words and deeds which were at once proud and conciliatory.

Trotski, who had not appeared himself, would have no secret negotiations. What a challenge ! Here was a man who had piled up human agony without end, a man laden with the curses of millions. If he insisted on public discussion it must have been because he expected that the German diplomats either would not wish to take up the moral offensive against him or would be too clumsy to carry it through.

The negotiations began with studied courtesy. Meals were taken together. My cousin, Prince Ernst Hohenlohe, found himself at table by the side of Madame Byzenko, who had qualified herself[1] by murdering a Minister.[2]

The Russians proclaimed their principles, in essence the programme of Kerenski, which had in its time excited the democracies in all countries ; the programme of no annexations and no war indemnities. The right of self-determination was conceded to all nations, not only to the races which had lost their independence in this war, but also to the various nationalities which before the war were without independence inside the great state federations. The Russians went so far as to demand the application of this principle to the colonies.

In our reply we declared our agreement in principle[3] with the programme of no annexations and no indemnities. We announced our intention to restore political independence to the peoples which had lost it in the war.

But we rejected the right of self-determination for nationalities inside the great state federations. ' The inclusion or otherwise within a state of national groups which possess no state independence is a question which cannot be regulated as between states but must be solved by each state with its peoples independently by constitutional methods.'[4]

We countered the demand for the self-determination of our colonies by pointing out that the loyalty shown by the native population to Germany in her direst need was a testimony which in its seriousness and importance outweighed any possible expression of will by vote.

[1] Cf. General Max Hoffmann, *Der Krieg der versäumten Gelegenheiten*, Munich, 1923, p. 190.

[2] She had murdered General Victor Victorovitch Sacharof, formerly Minister of War, on 5th December, 1905.

[3] In spite of this it was agreed : ' The Allied Powers had more than once emphasized the possibility of a reciprocal renunciation of compensation both for war costs and for war damage. In virtue of this only the outlays for their subjects who had been prisoners of war and the costs of the damage done in their own territory by acts of violence contrary to international law to the civilian subjects of their adversary would have to be made good by each belligerent power.' (Helfferich, *op. cit.* p. 265 f.)

[4] *Ibid.* p. 265.

The German delegation attached a condition to its recognition of these principles ; namely, that the Allies must within a given term pledge themselves unreservedly to precise conditions binding on all peoples in equal degree.

The Russian delegation was in essence satisfied with this declaration. ' In spite of differences of opinion on details it recognizes the enormous importance of this step on the way to a general peace. It sees in it a basis for immediate entry on negotiations with all belligerent powers.'

On 28th December, 1917, came the conflict of principle.[1] The Russian delegation proposed that in accordance with the right recognized by the Russian Government of all the peoples living in Russia to self-determination, even to the point of secession, an opportunity should be given to the population of the territories occupied by Germany within the briefest time-limit, precisely determined, to decide the question of their union with one or other Empire or their independence. The presence of foreign troops was not to be permitted.

Germany declared herself ready, as soon as peace with Russia is concluded and the demobilization of the Russian forces carried out, to evacuate her present positions and the occupied Russian territory ; but demanded recognition by Russia that the stipulated expression of will by the population had already taken place through authorized representatives in Lithuania, in Kurland, the eastern part of Livonia as well as in Poland, and was for secession from the Russian state federation. It was conceded that confirmation of the declaration of severance already made should follow later by means of a plebiscite on a broad basis, at which military pressure of any sort was to be excluded.

The Russian delegation dissented : ' Our standpoint is that only such declaration of will can be treated as an actual

[1] According to General Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 201 f., and Czernin (*Im Weltkrieg*, Berlin und Wien, 1919, pp. 309,311) the breach had already been foreshadowed on the 26th December by Hoffmann's statement to Joffe that the Russian delegation put a different interpretation on the idea of a peace without forcible annexations from the representatives of the Central Powers. On receiving this communication Joffe was ' as if he had been struck ' and ' in despair.'

expression of the popular will as is manifested as the result of a vote taken in the territories in question in the total absence of foreign troops.'

This closed the business discussions before the ten days interval in which the Russians were to attempt to induce the Allies to join in the negotiations.

It is remarkable that our delegates did not yet realize that the German and the Russian standpoints were irreconcilable. The coming breach, indeed, was already clearly marked in the Russian declaration.

The diplomats of the Central Powers were at special pains in their concluding addresses to convey the impression that peace was on the march. We should not forget that behind the Austrian delegate, Count Czernin, stood his Emperor's command [1] not to come home without peace in his pocket.

There was no lack of compliments. Popof, the Bulgarian Minister of Justice, certified that the Russian delegation embodied the great Russian people's sense of right. By way of giving expression to this idea Popof (as reported by Wolff on 28th December, 1917) then handed over the chairmanship to Joffe, the head of the Russian delegation. Hakki Pasha's farewell words to the Russian delegates were that they were good diplomats and good statesmen, and he offered them his testimony that during the negotiations they had shown great honesty and justice and much practical sense.

Feeling behind the scenes cannot have been so harmonious as Wolff depicted it. According to General Hoffmann [2] the Russian delegate Pokrovski would appear to have shed tears of rage and cried out that nobody could pretend that there had been no annexations if Russia were to lose eighteen provinces.

So ended the first act of the farce of Brest-Litovsk.

If I criticize our behaviour at this time of day, I am not doing it from an historian's point of view. I am

[1] Cf. Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 202; see further Czernin's letter to Kuehlmann of 27th December, 1917, in Bredt, *Der Deutsche Reichstag im Weltkrieg, Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Vol. VIII., 1926, p. 223, n. 14.

[2] Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 202.

setting down the ideas which disquieted our group at the time.

We had already lost a battle in our stage management. We should have faced the Russians in a cool businesslike attitude, prepared at any moment to pass to the attack against Trotski —that " Saviour of the World "—whose declared aim was to bring about revolution among the German masses. Instead, we met the Russians with an assiduous courtesy which made it difficult for us to assume the rôle of moral accuser when the moment came.

German diplomacy, in fact, confirmed Trotski's prestige before his own people, before the Allied peoples and before the German masses. I should like to-day to express my agreement with those who go so far as to claim that the rule of the People's Commissaries was then threatened with collapse, and that we saved it.[1]

The Russians came to Brest-Litovsk not only as counsel for their own country ; they wished, like Wilson, to represent the cause of humanity. In face of this we ought not to have remained purely passive, saying ' yes ' to this demand, ' no ' to that, and making reservations to a third. It was no use leaving the battle of ideas to Wilson and Trotski only, we ought to have confronted Western and Eastern jargon with a well thought out programme of our own for the new ordering of Europe, a programme which took account of realities.

Such was our right and our duty, for the independent existence of the border peoples was not threatened by us. Quite the contrary. If the day of freedom was now approaching for Finns and Balts and the rest, it was thanks to us, for we had laid the Russian Empire in ruins. And if these liberated peoples wished to maintain themselves against the Bolshevist danger, we again were their only hope and their only protection. It is true that at the time our Press gave no inkling that the German nation had grasped the meaning of its mission as liberator and orderer of Eastern Europe. Our editors, like our diplomats, lived in fear of betraying a

[1] See Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 189.

lack of the finesse of political realism and of being decried as idealists.

But the fighting army on the Eastern front was filled with the greatness of the task of saving the alien peoples, and shaping their destinies. There was the General who said : ' No decent man in my opinion could stand idly by and see a whole people murdered.' [1] Nor let us forget the Hussar patrols who took the law into their own hands and pushed forward, broke prisons open, and at the last moment saved thousands of kinsmen from being shot down by the Red Guards.

In fact, the sap of imperialism was then working in our people's blood. The mere aim of self-preservation no longer satisfied the newly awakened vitality. Our sense of power longed for liberating expression. Soldiers and civilians alike wanted to hear from their leaders that more than mere material things was at stake in the war Germany was fighting.

Trotski was undertaking to lay the foundations not only of a peace between Germany and Russia, but of a general peace. Moreover he had succeeded in making the negotiations public. We were therefore dealing, whether we wished or not, with public opinion in the Western countries as well. If we could only have made up our mind to outline precisely the peace we desired, it would have been the natural thing to clear up the Belgian question within the same framework and give Lansdowne the answer for which he and millions were waiting.

But having limited ourselves to saying ' yes ' to principles put forward by the other side, we ought never to have so chosen our words that we merely appeared to be making concessions. As it was, by setting a time-limit to our acceptance of national self-determination, and making it dependent on the Allies also accepting, we presented the Russians with the handsome rôle of victors in the battle of ideas, a rôle in which they could lay down conditions which we were ready to accept with this or that limitation. There is no such thing as a principle with a time-limit, subject to

[1] Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 223.

revocation, when one has confidence in his power to enforce what he believes to be right.

Our diplomatic procedure had so far been unoriginal and sterile, but we had at least not yet definitely ruined our international position. On 28th December, 1917, we made our irreparable mistake. We gave the impression to the whole world and to the German masses that in contrast to the Russian attitude our agreement to the national right of self-determination was insincere and that annexationist designs lurked behind it. We rejected the Russian demand for a free and untramelled popular vote in the occupied territories on the ground that the Kurlanders, Lithuanians and Poles had already decided their own fate. We ought never to have claimed the arbitrarily instituted or enlarged land-councils as authoritative representative assemblies.

The Russian request for a referendum should either have been accepted without reserve or replaced by the demand for a National Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage. Immediate evacuation had of course to be rejected. We could agree to it without hesitation for the post-war period, but now it was our duty to make clear to the Russians and to the world that the danger of undue influence on the elections by a military garrison whose task was to maintain order was trifling to vanishing point as compared with the terror of civil war which it was the design of the Bolshevists to unchain. We could boldly have proclaimed our right and our duty to keep the bloody dictatorship of the proletariat away from the liberated nations as well as from our own frontiers—to get at which was the very object of the Russian demand for evacuation.

And more. He to whom the words ' Civis Germanus sum ' meant no catch phrase but a sacred mission, had no call to speak and act at Brest-Litovsk as if we had no interest in unoccupied Livonia and Esthonia. In these countries sentinels of our civilization had had their homes for centuries. They had clung to our speech and custom throughout the foreign domination of Swedes and Russians, unbidden and unsupported by the Empire and in the sole strength of the

German conscience which bade them stand on guard at the outposts.

And now cries of distress from these kinsmen were daily reaching us through the Russian lines, begging us to put a stop to murder and deportation. A few battalions could bring relief; 'but the Russian and Esthonian murder-bands are building on your passivity.'

Our group thought at the time that it saw in the Russian demand for evacuation a handle to enforce the bloodless liberation of Livonia and Esthonia. A memorandum dating from the end of December includes the following sentences:

> 'So far as their words go the Bolsheviks seem to be more sincere in their acceptance of the right of national self-determination than Germany—a heavy handicap for us in the competition for the good opinion of the alien peoples.
>
> The question is: what can be done to get rid of this encumbrance? We must confront the Russians with a new proposal which, so to speak, overtrumps their friendliness towards the alien peoples. We must table the demand that before the forthcoming test of the popular will—and such a test is best effected by means of a freely elected representative parliament—not only shall the territory of Kurland and Lithuania and the occupied parts of Livonia be evacuated by the German troops, but the whole Livonian and Esthonian territory up to the Peipus frontier by the Russians.
>
> We must claim that the Russian title to possession has been abrogated in Livonia and Esthonia by the anarchy which prevails there, just as it has been in Kurland by the German occupation. The destiny of Livonia and Esthonia is thus brought once more before the bar of history by the events of the war, exactly like the destiny of Poland, Lithuania and Kurland.
>
> In Livonia and Esthonia murders are taking place which make the cleaning up of these areas a duty of common humanity. The Russians themselves have every interest in this, since the bands of soldiers who commit the murders give it out that they are acting in the name of the Bolshevists. It is therefore a common interest of Russia, the alien races, and Germany, that Livonia and Esthonia should cease to be a scene of murder.
>
> In making this demand we should in fact appear as the liberators of the small nations.

Should the Russians decline to withdraw, we also refuse to withdraw from Kurland and the odium falls on the Russians.

If they do not refuse, I have no doubt that the decision will fall in our favour. The inhabitants of Livonia and Esthonia would then be freed from the Russians without German conquest by the mere force of our political will. The very risk that we run would strengthen the impression of bona fides.

We have numerous relations with the Esthonians which could be used in our favour by way of Finland and Sweden. . . . In case of need a Swedish occupation of the disputed territory might be considered as a stop-gap. Any neutral police to maintain order ought certainly to be welcomed.

Of course the success of this political enterprise cannot be guaranteed with mathematical certainty. But neither can the success of a strategical enterprise be mathematically guaranteed. Statesmanship, like strategy, has at times to go to work with a faith whose justification must depend on success alone.

England risked more than we should risk at the present time when Campbell Bannerman granted their independence to the Boer republics.

. . . For the sake of our position in the world, Germany must not play the rôle of narrow-hearted nationalism at the conference table in Brest-Litovsk. It is not enough that we should take up the ideas of the Bolshevists, modify their world-redeeming proposals and cut them to suit the interests of Germany ; we must come forward with a German programme which makes the right and the freedom of our neighbour nations an integral part of our national purpose. The Bolshevists must not appear as the moral leaders. It is not too late to get the leadership into our own hands if we address demands to the Russians which are backed by the world's sense of right.

We did the opposite. Ours was the right in this German-Russian dispute, ours the confidence of the alien peoples as never before or after ; but the obfuscated methods by which our negotiations were conducted had the result of presenting Germany as the enemy and Russia as the protector of the small nations to the eyes of the world.

Trotski, Lloyd George and Wilson hastened to take advantage of the opening which we had given.

From his headquarters Trotski at once changed the direction of his political offensive. His final aim was always the

world revolution. Originally he had clearly thought that our victories and our readiness for peace had rendered the German masses immune to his propaganda ; while the allied peoples would be more accessible to it, thanks to their military disappointments and to the determination of their Governments to continue the war at any price. So he had made untiring efforts by means of wireless addresses and letters to social-democratic organizations to egg on the proletariat in the allied countries. He had reminded the French that the French Government's promises of victory had not been fulfilled. A military solution was entirely out of the question. The French proletariat should raise its voice and insist on taking part in the negotiations.

He had taunted the British Labour leaders, telling them that they ought to force their Government to give them passports for the international conference at Stockholm.

But now, after we had made our disastrous mistake, Trotski was quick as lightning to see the weak point in the German home front. And now the whole weight of his attack fell on us. Wireless talks and pamphlets rained on our soldiers, insisting that the Supreme Command and German Imperialism bore the guilt for the prolongation of the war. The Bolshevist agents in Germany received stricter instructions in the direction of activism. There is no doubt that Trotski was further encouraged to transfer his main attack to us by the optimistic reports sent him by the German Independents. According to the *Sozialistische Korrespondenz* an urgent exhortation was sent to St. Petersburg at Christmas to draw out the peace negotiations because things in Germany were developing in a revolutionary direction ; the conclusion of a separate peace between Germany and Russia was objectionable, because it would prejudice this development and strengthen the governing classes.

Lloyd George, too, had been freed by us from a great embarrassment. In spite of several assaults he had not yet succeeded in gaining control of the Lansdowne movement. He had at first set Bonar Law and his Conservative pack on to the old leader ; and then, on 14th December, he had him-

self appeared in full war-paint and had delivered a new 'Knock-out' speech. But the tone of the happy warrior was no longer there. Lloyd George had depicted the seriousness of the military situation with grim and dogged truthfulness—'America is not yet in and Russia is out.' He closed with the avowal that he 'feared the extreme pacifists less than the man who believes that there is a half-way house between victory and defeat.' And the speech had rung off with the battle-cry, 'Germany must be punished, for the criminal must not be stronger than the law.'

But the Prime Minister had not carried his point.

The Liberal opposition had taken up Lansdowne's demand for revision of the war aims announced in January 1917.[1] Lansdowne's adhesion to the peace of understanding had found tempestuous approval among the trade unions. But above all the echo which he found in America had given food for thought: 'Out with a new peace programme before the terrible trial of strength in the West begins.'

Such was the state of feeling on which the Russian invitation to participate in the negotiations was launched. The responsibility for the continuation of the war was already being fastened on Lloyd George in more than one quarter. The 'Knock-out blow' policy had lost the game if Germany was now garnering the first 'democratic peace.'

Then our equivocation of 28th December came like a godsend. Lloyd George saw and seized the unique opportunity. In his speech of 5th January, 1918, he himself outlined a new British programme of war aims which sounded like an echo to the Russian demand for no annexations and no indemnities, but was primarily intended to prove to his own people and the other enemy peoples that Germany and not Britain was wrecking the peace of understanding.

The man's instinct was marvellous. The preparation and get-up of the speech showed an unerring sense of the moral effects he wanted to attain.

He was addressing the trade unions, and he introduced

[1] Note of 10th January, 1917, the joint reply of the Entente to the American Peace Note of 21st December, 1916.

himself at the very beginning of the speech as the spokesman not of the Government only, but of the whole nation. He had previously consulted the Labour leaders, the Representatives of the Dominions and the Liberal Opposition and had assured himself of their agreement; for the trial of strength which lay before them could only be endured to the end if the issues at stake were clearly defined and approved by the conscience of the nation.

Now followed a proclamation of war aims which in effect amounted to the revision of the January Note which Lord Lansdowne had demanded. First of all came the assurance, several times repeated, that the struggle was not a war of aggression against the German people; neither its destruction nor its dismemberment lay in Britain's design; neither did Britain desire to destroy Germany's great position in the world—only the project of military domination must be given up. Neither was the dissolution of Austria-Hungary in contemplation; its constituent peoples need only obtain a wide measure of self-government, and then Austria-Hungary would become a bulwark of peace. True, the constitution of the German Empire was a dangerous anachronism, and the acceptance of a truly democratic constitution would prove convincingly that Germany has given up her plans of world dominion, and facilitate the conclusion of a democratic peace—'but that is Germany's own affair.'

A sham regret was expressed that the Central Powers in spite of urgent requests from their opponents and also from the neutrals had not answered the President's peace message of 22nd January, 1917, but preserved, as they had always done, an obstinate silence on the subject of their war aims.

What the leader of the opposition had done on 26th July, 1917,[1] and Lord Lansdowne on 29th November, 1917, the premier statesman of England now repeats.[2]

He asks us openly:

> 'What are your intentions in regard to Belgium? What is the meaning of all the German and Austrian declarations

[1] See above, p. 143.

[2] The following quotations are given in their original form, abbreviated in the German version. [Tr.]

regarding Belgium's restoration? "Does it mean that Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania will be as independent and as free as the Germans or any other nation? Or does it mean that all manner of interferences and restrictions, political and economic, incompatible with the status and dignity of a free, self-respecting people are to be imposed?"'

In regard to Alsace-Lorraine he says:

'We mean to stand by the French democracy to the death in the demand they make for a reconsideration of the great wrong of 1871, when, without any regard to the wishes of the population, two French provinces were torn from the side of France and incorporated in the German Empire.'

In all the other questions at issue he demanded, in accord with the Russian programme, that the right of national self-determination should be respected.

He addressed Russia in the tone of a pouting but magnanimous ally: It was certainly not Germany's intention to restore a single one of the Russian provinces or cities now occupied by her.

'The present rulers of Russia are now engaged . . . in separate negotiations with the common enemy. I am indulging in no reproaches; I am merely stating facts with a view to making it clear why Britain cannot be held accountable for decisions taken in her absence.'

Even for the German colonies Lloyd George followed the Russian lead in demanding that the wishes of the population should be taken into account. The loyalty of our colonial troops proved nothing in particular; it was proved, in any case, only for East Africa, and even there only for the askaris, a warrior caste which had been deliberately pampered.

He closed with a profession of adhesion to the pacifist ideal, steeped in the vocabulary of the Liberal idealists—sacredness of treaties, increasing evil of conscription, vast preparation for war a disaster to our civilization, institution of an international corporation to reduce the burden of armaments and diminish the prospects of war.

And so Lloyd George, to all appearance, placed himself at the head of the Lansdowne movement—in truth, in order to kill it. Immediately after this great speech the rift in the British home front closed.

The *Times* of 8th January, 1918, spoke of the most important state document since the declaration of war.[1]

> ' If this acceptance is not forthcoming, the offer lapses, and the speech remains what American opinion judges it to be—" a notable reinforcement to the forces fighting for peace with victory ".'

The newspapers which supported a peace of understanding were ' deeply thankful ' that their advice had been followed. Henderson, the Labour leader, declared that in a certain sense the speech embodied the programme of the Labour Party.

The whole British and American Press had now taken up the cue : ' Now it is Germany's turn to speak.'

On 8th January, 1918, there followed, almost like a concerted parallel step, Wilson's pronouncement to Congress which contained the famous Fourteen Points. The points of agreement with Lloyd George's conditions are striking.

The chief stress is laid on Belgium. The restoration of Alsace-Lorraine is not expressly demanded ; reference is made only to the reparation of a wrong, a wrong done to France.

The plans for partition pointed at Austria are apparently withdrawn by the use of the word ' autonomy.'

For Germany the least pleasant sound was that of Point Thirteen which concerned Poland and in which access to the sea was demanded for Poland. Still the wording was susceptible of the interpretation that Danzig should be made a free port. What he said regarding the League of Peace and the freedom of the seas was in essence repeated from his earlier programme.

Special importance attached to what he said on Russia.

[1] The *Observer's* verdict is similar : ' If the enemy throws away his chance, the nation and the allies will be strengthened for the war.'

Lloyd George had taken care to maintain a certain reserve towards the Russian rulers, but Wilson's salaams to blood-stained Bolshevism threw Hakki Pasha himself far into the shade. Testimony was offered not only to the justice and wisdom of the People's Commissaries but also to their noble democratic spirit. In language of positive exuberance Wilson spoke of their love of mankind,[1] which every friend of humanity was bound to admire. 'The Russians have declined to leave others in the lurch for the sake of their own safety.' When he went on to reject the severance of territory from Russia without a single reference to the Balts, Lithuanians and Finns, who were then being threatened in their new-found freedom, his action was in full accord with the deafness to the 'cries of distress of the alien peoples in Russia' with which I had accused him in my speech of 14th December, 1917.[2]

The flattery addressed to Russia cannot be excused by innocence of ethnography and geography. Wilson was trying a last throw to stiffen Russia's resistance to the German demands, and was clearly—at least we would fain hope so—unconscious of the fearful responsibility he was assuming in presenting the Russian dictators at such a moment with the moral recognition of the United States, simply as a measure of war necessity.

Wilson's peroration was addressed to the German people. It cannot by any possibility have been an accident that after putting forward his Fourteen Points in which two of Lansdowne's demands—the freedom of the seas and an international organization for the preservation of peace—were already included, he went on to address

[1] What this 'love of mankind' is like is shown by S. P. Melgunof (*Der rote Terror in Russland*, 1918 *bis* 1923, Berlin), who gives a frightful picture of the Bolshevist atrocities. See further Paul Miliukof (*Russlands Zusammenbruch*, 1926) who in Vol. I., p. 84, gives a description of the tortures which reminds one of the Middle-Ages. He quotes statistics taken from the *Times* of March 1922 according to which 1,766,118 people were killed as victims of Bolshevism. Miliukof declares (p. 83) that the list quoted is not an irreproachable document, but is convinced that the total result is 'hardly exaggerated.'

[2] See above, p. 187 f.

to us the three remaining declarations desired by Lansdowne :

1. ' We do not wish to fight Germany either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world —the new world in which we now live—instead of a place of mastery.'

2. The threat of a trade war after the war is disclaimed.

3. Wilson declares that he has no desire to interfere in our internal affairs, but then apostrophises the Reichstag Majority as follows :

' But it is necessary, we must frankly say, and necessary as a preliminary to any intelligent dealings with her on our part, that we should know whom her spokesmen speak for when they speak to us, whether for the Reichstag Majority or for the Military Party and the men whose creed is imperial domination.'

The Reichstag Majority was not in a position to answer Wilson. Only meaningless generalities such as were contained in the Peace Resolution could unite the three parties in a common course of action ; any drafting of a precise programme of war aims must come to grief on the Belgian question, exactly as had happened in July 1917 when the Reichstag Majority stood ' with all its crimes broad blown as flush as May.'

But in anticipation of the coming offensive a considerable number of members of the Centre Party and of the Progressive People's Party were ready to break away if a demand were to come from the ranks of the Reichstag Majority for the cleaning up of the Belgian question. If, on the other hand, the Government had taken the lead with a declaration on Belgium, the Reichstag Majority would not only have held together, but would have followed gladly and loyally.

But our political authorities were paralyzed, as always happened when military events were anticipated.

It is to the lasting credit of the Supreme Command that

it was the only competent authority which recognized that the attempt of Lloyd George and Wilson to saddle us with the responsibility for the continuation of the war, ought to be answered with a political counter-offensive, and that, too, before the beginning of the military operations.

'The final military decision between Germany and Britain is approaching. For its issue the degree of resistance of which the British home front is capable is of decisive importance. Will it collapse under the military blows or will it hold? That is the all-important question.

Lloyd George is fully aware that everything depends on the solidity of the British home front. He is again summoning all his power of suggestion to mobilize Britain's resources and Britain's war will once more for the coming passage at arms.

To-day it is the supreme task of German policy to cripple this mobilization. When our operations begin the British home front must be so worn down that our military successes may produce their greatest possible effect. The weeks before the beginning of the offensive are the decisive period for this work of political preparation. . . .

We must be clear on this point, that it is the threat of the German offensive which unites and rallies Britain's forces. In hard times and while hard times are in prospect the British people stands by its Government. The whole of Britain is to-day looking forward to black months.

It would be quite wrong to conclude from this view of the situation that military successes must be dispensed with if we are to pierce the British home front.

The question that arises is rather this: How can we deal a blow at Britain in the field and at the same time utilize this blow to bring about the collapse of the British war machine at home?

The answer is: Germany must employ an adroit, unflagging political propaganda to convey the suggestion to the British people that Lloyd George's 'Knock-out' policy is alone to blame for the continuation of the war, that it is following imperialistic aims of conquest while a peace consonant with Britain's honour and security could have been had earlier by negotiation, without further bloodshed.

If German policy fails to convey this suggestion to the British people Lloyd George secures his unbroken home front for the decisive battle, and this front will hold even under the heaviest defeats till American help comes.

To-day words are battles: the right word is a battle won, the wrong word is a battle lost. . . .

. . . The weeks between now and the beginning of the military offensive ought not to pass without political use being made of them. We must harness all our forces. No means of achieving victory and heightening its effect ought to be neglected. . . .'

This 'earnest request,' dated 14th January, 1918, was addressed by the Supreme Command to the Government. It came from a memorandum which Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften had submitted to General Ludendorff and which the latter had forwarded to the Chancellor, 'with his urgent recommendation.'

This memorandum [1] has been printed by Ludendorff in his volume of documents and will always serve as a piece of evidence to exonerate the Supreme Command. And this remains true in spite of the fact that the core of this project for a political offensive, the declaration on Belgium, had been omitted from the document as originally drafted by Haeften and Hahn.[2]

[1] Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 473 ff.

[2] The essential points in the paragraphs omitted from the memorandum were as follows:

'Lord Lansdowne has himself shown us how we can help him. In his letter he regrets the vagueness of the German Government on the Belgian question.

Lord Lansdowne has certainly no doubt that an Anglo-German understanding would not come to grief on the Belgian question. That ought to be enough if he were a leader of suggestive power. He is not that, but only a proud and courageous aristocrat who can guide popular currents but cannot create them. Pacifists have had the message sent to Germany: "Put the weapon with which he can beat Lloyd George in his hand!" This message . . . has reached us time and again.

Lloyd George, on the other hand, is collecting all the German utterances which would appear to show that Germany wants to keep a hand on Belgium.

The British war and peace parties both know perfectly well what weapons they need to attain their objects. But we have so far gone on offering the British peace party weapons of which they could make no use but of which the British war party could make the fullest use. (Real guarantees, etc.)

We come now to the most important question: In what form should the declaration on Belgium be made?

Up till now our politicians have always thought of the Belgian declaration as a mere peace feeler. This raises a question of principle. Any

Among the questions of guilt thrown up by history the most serious will perhaps be : Whose fault was it that we did not come out of the war at the right time ? Whose responsibility is it in chief that the Government of the Empire did nothing for peace before the offensive and nothing to assist the coming decision in the field ? The answer can be given now. General Ludendorff, in this memorandum, even in the form in which he sent it in, made two very grave announcements to the Government. Firstly, the Supreme Command, far from sharing the public's exaggerated hopes of victory, did not expect that our coming victories would force our enemies to a peace of capitulation. Secondly, the Supreme Command therefore demands a political attack on the British home front before the beginning of the operations.

The proper answer from the Government would have been : ' Very well, but any political offensive will peter out if it has to dispense with the really effective explosive, namely the declaration on Belgium. You might just as well undertake *your* offensive without artillery. Allow us therefore to make the declaration on Belgium ; otherwise we will do nothing.'

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direct or indirect peace offer addressed to the present British Government means the weakening of the British peace party and the encouragement of the friends of war in Britain. The British people . . . naturally says to itself : Only discouragement can explain this advance, for Lloyd George talked of wanting to knock out brigands and murderers, and now the people so addressed reply, in Erzberger's words : " If we only sat down at the conference table, we could come to an understanding in two hours."

True, this excessive heartiness of Erzberger's finds no place in our official documents, but belief in the possibility of negotiations with Lloyd George's Government was the fatal error of the September feeler (" for its sake Asquith's question of 26th July, 1917, had remained unanswered."—Note from the draft), and continues to haunt recent pronouncements.

It is of course true that after each peace feeler the extreme pacifists in Britain become more active ; but we have no interest in *their* liveliness, for they only discredit the peace movement. In order to help Lord Lansdowne we must influence the great mass of doubters. These form the middle party between the war party and the peace party and swerve to war or to peace according to their view of the military situation. Every German peace feeler gives them a rosier view of the military situation.

The Belgian declaration must take the form of a challenge to Lloyd George's Government.'

If the Supreme Command had rejected such a counter-demand from the political authorities, then one would be justified in speaking of military responsibility for our political inactivity. *The counter-demand was never made.*

The conference at Brest Litovsk was resumed on 9th January, 1918, amid unprecedented tension in all countries. The Western war parties were lying in wait for fresh German equivocations. But those who still believed that the trial of strength in the West could be avoided placed their hopes in German diplomacy. They hoped that it would set an example at Brest-Litovsk which would sweep the allied peoples on to the path of negotiation.

Trotski had demanded the transference of the conference to Stockholm with the transparent idea that he would be able to operate better from there against the home fronts of both belligerent parties. Now he appeared in Brest-Litovsk himself. The fraternization nonsense ceased at once, unfortunately on the Russian initiative and not on ours.

In his speech in the Reichstag on 25th January, 1918, Kuehlmann complained that the 'friendly intercourse' outside the conference room had ceased. 'It was like night following day; the common meals had not been resumed; the Russians kept themselves hermetically sealed up in their houses, and no private conversation was allowed.'

From the first moment Trotski made it clear that the weight of the Russian offensive was now to fall on us. Germany, Britain and France, we were all his enemies, and clever general as he was, he wanted to attack where he judged the position to be weakest. His German friends had informed him of the coming January strike and had clearly awakened exaggerated hopes. And so his cue was to discredit the German Government at any price and to spike the peace of understanding which would have strengthened its position. He derided and taunted our representatives; he almost ill-treated them. His challenges came to a climax on 12th January. 'It is a mistake,' he then said, 'to measure Russia's position in the world by her present impotence;

just as little could Germany's economic power be assessed from her present food situation.'

General Hoffmann complained of the inflammatory wireless talks and pamphlets which aimed at unchaining revolution and civil war in our own country.[1] Kuehlmann, in reply, referred to Germany's settled principle not to interfere with the internal affairs of Russia. Then Trotski scoffed at Kuehlmann for throwing up the moral offensive in this way. He would regard it as a step forward if the German Government would speak out freely and candidly regarding the internal affairs of Russia.

Unfortunately we did not take up this challenge.

In a diplomatic sense, on the other hand, everything that Kuehlmann did was shrewd and sound. Thus he headed Trotski into recognizing the delegates of the Ukrainian Central Rada, and that, too, not only as a sub-section of the Russian delegation but as the representatives of an independent state, and thus spoiled Trotski's game when the latter suddenly had a new Ukrainian delegation of local Bolshevists marched up. Thus on 9th February, in the middle of Trotski's play-acting, he caught him out with the concrete fact of a peace between Germany and the Ukraine. Thus, when Trotski took his revenge by the 'grand coup' of 10th February—'the decisive hour has come; I give up the war and demobilize, but I refuse to sign peace'—he replied with the declaration: 'In that case the Central Powers are at war with Russia, for the *raison d'être* of an armistice is peace; therefore, if peace is not made, the operations of war begin after the expiry of the term provided';[2] and thus laid the diplomatic foundation for the German advance which delivered Livonia and Esthonia and gave us a free hand in the West. All this stamped him as a diplomat of rare intelligence and energy.

[1] On the extent of the Russian revolutionary propaganda in Germany cf. Miliukof, *op. cit.* p. 153 ff.

[2] According to Hoffmann (*op. cit.* p. 214 f.) Kuehlmann was driven to take up this attitude (which was opposed to his original intention) by Hoffmann's protest and the intervention of the Supreme Command.

As a dialectician, too, Kuehlmann was fully a match for Trotski. On more than one occasion he landed him in embarrassment, as for example when he accepted the Russian demand that representatives of the occupied territories should be called in, but attached the condition that in that case the Russian delegation must recognize—presumptively at least—the peoples so represented as ' national personalities.' But when all was said and done these were only tactical successes —in the field of strategy Trotski remained victor. He left Brest-Litovsk as the martyr of the right of self-determination, and we as the bullies of the small nations. Things should not have come to this. Brest-Litovsk demanded of us statesmanship first of all and only secondly diplomacy. What was needed was to overcome the world's distrust of Germany's word, to make an end of the legend of German plans of world dominion and to unmask the Bolshevists as hypocrites and as the enslavers of men and of nations. This would have been easy if we had only begun by proclaiming solemnly and unreservedly that we felt it to be our right and our duty to protect the peoples which had been set free from the Russian chaos until they had secured their individual existence, but would evacuate the occupied territory as soon as peaceful conditions were assured, so that as soon as possible, preferably under neutral control, constituent assemblies might be elected to lay down definitive constitutions for these peoples.

And next we should have demanded that Russia should disinterest herself in the border states not on the ground that we were the victors and they the vanquished and because ' our strong position ' permitted it (as Count Hertling said on 3rd January, 1918), but because it was our duty to protect Western civilization against the Bolshevist destroyers who were standing by to ruin the newly-liberated nations by murder and rapine and bloody civil war. If, while they did so, they paraded the Western jargon of freedom and self-determination on their lips, what was that but the old trick of the wolf who softened his voice with chalk ? Our business was to challenge the hypocrite : ' I know you, you are the wolf.'

Not that the small nations were in any danger of being fooled; but the Allied peoples and our social-democratic masses were in urgent need of enlightenment.

We needed only to follow the example of the Ukrainian delegate Ljubinski, who hurled the following words in Trotski's face [1] at Brest-Litovsk on 1st February, 1918:

> 'The loud declarations of the Bolshevists regarding the complete freedom of the peoples of Russia are only the vulgar stuff of demagogy. The Bolshevist Government, which has scattered the constituent assembly and which only rests on the bayonets of the Red Guards will never make up its mind to introduce in Russia itself the righteous principles of [national] self-determination, for it knows perfectly well that not only will the numerous republics, the Ukraine, the Don area, the Caucasus and others, not recognize it as their Government, but that even the Russian people itself will deny it this right.'

All we had to do was to strengthen this primary charge by adducing detailed instances from all parts of Russia. Every day the despairing cries of the Ukrainians, Balts and Finns were bringing Red Guard atrocities to the notice of our commanders in the field. But above all the cynical brutality of the official actions of the Russian Government was increasing under cover of that conspiracy of silence to which the Western Governments had obviously pledged themselves.

The facts in our possession were powerful enough to break even this conspiracy of silence but they needed to be marshalled in a speech by the leading statesman; General Hoffmann's detailed statistics [2] fizzled out in the general indignation at military interference.

Since I consider the legend of the good will of the Russian Government to have been not only a great falsehood but also partly responsible for the continuance of their reign of terror, I am concerned even to-day to supply proof from this first period of the Soviet regime that the Russians 'only proclaimed

[1] On the powerful impression made on Trotski by these charges, see Czernin, *op. cit.* p. 332.

[2] Cf. Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 209.

the principle of the right of national self-determination the more effectively to hinder its practical application.' [1]

I need only appeal to the evidence which was published in the Press at the time and was thus at the disposal of the Government.

On the Baltic provinces I will say little. I might be accused of prejudice, since so many Germans were murdered and deported in that area. And I must admit that in Esthonia the inborn hatred of landless Esthonians against the big German landowners introduced a special ' national ' brutality into the local Bolshevism. The Esthonian incendiaries often surpassed their Russian teachers in savagery. I want to stress only this, that it was not only German noblemen but also Lettish and Esthonian peasants who when the scourge first descended upon them appealed day after day for the help of the German troops, and then when at last the latter came greeted them with a storm of cheering which will never be forgotten by any who heard it.

On 12th January, 1918, Trotski once more affirmed the Ukrainian people's right of self-determination. He desired, he said, to put no obstacle in the way of the independent participation of the Ukrainian peace delegation. But at the same time the Russian Government was leaving nothing undone to destroy the power of the Central Rada by means of civil war.

At the end of November the elections which were held all over Russia had resulted in the Ukraine territory in a brilliant victory of the Ukrainian national idea. Their candidates formed more than seventy-five per cent. of the Ukrainian members of the Sobranje, while the Bolshevists secured only ten per cent. Then the Petersburg Government dropped their original demand for fresh elections to the Rada and had recourse to their tried weapon, the summoning of a congress of workers and peasants. More than 2000 delegates assembled in Kieff, but contrary to the expectations of those who summoned them there was an overwhelming majority for the Central Rada. Only a small group of eighty Bolshevists

[1] Ljubinski at Brest-Litovsk on 1st February, 1918.

seceded ; they went to Charkof and attempted from there to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat by force. In the upshot they succeeded, with the support of bands of Russian soldiers, in terrorising a defenceless country to such an extent that the Bolshevism loathed by the majority of the people could finally be averted only with German help.

The independence of Finland had been proclaimed by the Finnish National Assembly on 6th December, 1917, and was recognized by the Russian Government on 7th January, 1918. But no later than the 28th January, 1918, the Finnish Government was compelled to protest against the participation of Russian troops in the Red revolt which broke out in Finland on the same day. It received the cynical reply :

> ' According to intelligence received in St. Petersburg the social revolution has begun in Finland. In accordance with its principles the Russian Government is obliged to support the proletariat in Finland in its struggle against the Finnish bourgeoisie. The Commissariat of the People sent help to the Finnish Red Guards and will go on doing so.'

True to this announcement fresh troops and fresh consignments of munitions continued to be sent to the help of the Red Guards. Finland, liberated at long last, had a narrow escape from being plunged into bloody anarchy. The rightful Government had already been overthrown, and Helsingfors was in the hands of the Reds. Then the Finns called out their last man. They rose—so German eye-witnesses have reported—as our people rose in 1813. The Swedish Government did not venture to embroil itself officially with the Russian Government ; but Swedish volunteers were allowed to reinforce the Finns.[1] The decision, as in the Ukraine, was brought about by the help of Germany. Every man capable of bearing arms in Finland was already in the ranks ; but the children, boys and girls alike, rendered valuable service to our troops as scouts.

During the collapse in October and November, 1918, we

[1] The poetess Selma Lagerlöf signed a moving appeal for the Finnish Struggle for Freedom.

were to see even border states which owed their freedom to our arms banding themselves together with the ' protégés and jackals ' [1] of the Entente. Among the unsavoury experiences which Germany in her misfortune had with spiteful and grabbing neighbours, Finland shines out. We shall never forget her gratitude.[2]

But nowhere were the fundamental rights of the people so shamelessly violated by the Russian Government as in their own country. You need only read the messages of the Russian Telegraph Agency. By their own admission the Bolshevists acted as the mortal enemies of the democratic idea : the elections to the Constituent Assembly were carried out under terrorism, the local Workers' and Soldiers' Councils were instructed by edict to recall such Social Democrats with leanings to the Right as had been elected or, if these refused to obey, to issue writs for fresh elections. In the middle of December Trotski said in an interview : ' If the Cadets are excluded as rebels from the Sobranje for the duration of the civil war, constitutional principles are certainly being set aside ; but the revolution has its own laws.' (*Vorwaerts*, 19th December, 1917.)

On 18th January the Sobranje was due to meet. Shortly before the first sitting Lenin gave it out that the National Assembly would at once be dissolved unless it firstly, ratified the Government of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, and secondly, approved the measures of socialization. An

[1] See above, p. 76 n.

[2] The command of our enterprise in Finland was entrusted to a particularly suitable officer in General Count Ruediger von der Goltz. Johannes Oehquist, (*Das Loewenbanner. Des finnischen Volkes Aufstieg zur Freiheit*, Berlin 1923, p. 174) writes : ' Goltz exemplified in all things that considerate prudence and gentlemanly reserve which was observed by the German Government in the matter of the Finland undertaking from its beginning to its final liquidation.' ' The help of Germany,' says Edv. Hjelt (Staatsrat and Chancellor of the University of Helsingfors, who died in 1921) in his *Recollections*, ' was a work of civilization without its like in the World War. Her military and political aim was naturally one which accorded with the interests of Germany—anything else indeed would be unthinkable—but she was at the same time moved by a strong idealism, that practical idealism which is so characteristic of the German nation, its clear consciousness of a human duty towards an oppressed and friendly people.'

association for the protection of the Constituent Assembly had been formed, which got up a procession with flags on the opening day. Lenin had the procession dispersed by sailors with machine-guns. Later in the day demonstrators were pelted with bombs from the roofs.

The National Assembly began with the singing of the International. It was mostly Social Democrats who had been elected, but the majority was not Bolshevist. The Cadets and Social Revolutionaries had between them a majority of two to one against the Bolshevists.

The assembly wanted first to discuss the negotiations of Brest-Litovsk and to consider the basis of a democratic peace. The Bolshevists urged in vain that the rights of the workers should be the first item on the agenda.

Then the Soviet Government in an extraordinary session of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils decreed the dissolution of the Sobranje. They gave as their reason that the Kerenski Party has formed a majority which declined to recognize the power of the Soviets. When the assembly wished to adjourn it was dispersed by sailors and Red Guards.

Trotski had hastened to St. Petersburg for the opening and dissolution of the Sobranje, fresh from his declamations on democracy and national self-determination.

On 3rd March the German advance was at an end. It had set Livonia and Esthonia free and had forced the Russians to sign the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk. President Wilson sent the Congress of the Soviets a message of sympathy on the German advance :

> 'May I not . . . express the sincere sympathy which the people of the United States feel for the Russian people at this moment when the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom . . . The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves for ever from an autocratic Government and to become the masters of their own life.'

This byzantinism before the Soviets reminds one indeed of the homage which the *Times* in its day offered to Tsarism, 'all for a quiet war.'

The whole enemy Press obediently echoed the watchword which had already been given out by the Supreme War Council of the Entente at Versailles on 4th February in the following form :

> ' The Supreme War Council gave the most careful consideration to the recent utterances of the German Chancellor and of the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, but was unable to find in them any real approximation to the moderate conditions laid down by all the Allied Governments. This conviction was only deepened by the impression made by the contrast between the professed idealistic aims with which the Central Powers entered upon the present negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and their now openly disclosed plans of conquest and spoliation. In the circumstances the Supreme War Council decided that the only immediate task before them lay in the prosecution, with the utmost vigour and in the closest and most effective co-operation, of the military effort of the Allies.'

In England even the Liberal Press swung dutifully into line. But it was surely not necessary for the *Manchester Guardian* to go so far as to speak of our advance into Russia, which saved thousands of lives, as an attack on a defenceless country.[1]

[1] It cannot be said that the Liberal Press did not know the truth about Soviet Russia. Thus Arthur Ransome reports in the *Daily News* of 28th January, 1918 : ' And M. Trotzky's opinion will be swayed not by considerations of military possibilities, or personal safety, but solely by the question whether peace or desperate war will best serve the universal revolution. In forecasting M. Trotzky's action it is necessary always to remember that he would sacrifice Russia to save Europe, and Europe to save the world, and that for him salvation and social revolution mean the same thing.' And Professor Pares, in the same paper, of 11th Frebruary, wrote : ' In the rear the collapse of the autocracy and the void thus created led to a struggle for power, the extreme revolutionaries now coming out with their matured plan for a dictatorship of the proletariat in which not equality or democracy was aimed at but a complete disfranchisement of all property and of all education. This is the meaning of the Soviet Government, and is the formula of the Bolsheviks. It is not pacifism. It is the substitution of a universal class war for the present European War, and then, to follow, wholesale annexations at the expense of classes. It should be added that the program was that of a small and resolute group of thinkers, and that in its application no account is taken of the ordinary principles of constitutionalism and of national representation so that . . . the most determined enemies of the Bolsheviks are those great Labour parties which stand nearest to them and see the collapse of all ordered liberty and of the new regime itself in the Bolsheviks' success.'

Nor did the Labour Party do anything to combat the lie that Trotski was protecting and the Germans suppressing the freedom of the border states. There was, especially in the Independent Labour Party, no lack of brave fighters for the truth, men who sprang from the best Liberal tradition —I recall only E. D. Morel and Ponsonby, formerly private secretary to Campbell Bannerman. But all these men, as Socialists, stood as if spellbound before the mighty words ' revolution ' and ' dictatorship of the proletariat.'

And so the Entente succeeded for the moment in proving to their peoples by the instance of Brest-Litovsk—which ought to have given the impulse to all-round peace negotiations—that there was nothing for it but to continue the war.

Meantime events had taken place in Germany which ought to have driven us for reasons of our own to resume the interrupted public peace conversation with the Western Powers.

CHAPTER III

CONTINUATION OF THE DIALOGUE WITH LANSDOWNE

FROM the beginning of the year bad news of the state of feeling among the workmen was finding its way into the Press. The language of the Independents was growing more insolent, and one had an uncanny feeling that the victory of Bolshevism in Russia was stiffening the backs of all those in Germany who wanted to cripple the war.

In the second half of January I received the following report from Berlin : [1]

'*17th January*, 1918.

. . . The internal like the external situation is exceedingly confused. Our military position has never been so brilliant. We have a wonderful background for a big political step. But the favourable moment will once more pass unutilized. The internal antagonism here cannot be called entirely impersonal ; many personal considerations also come into play. On one side a strong and passionate will, often in the grip of a demonic impatience but receptive to all honest counsels and with a wonderful power of self restraint. On the other side a . . . cabinet policy . . . operating with petty expedients, afraid of its natural allies, incapable of challenging an open dispute with its opponents—the only way which would lead to a reconciliation.

The present Government is putting up a lame fight for the franchise reform. I am expecting terrible times. For the first time I see an " ugly temper " in our people. Our big offensive will have enormous results in a military sense but in a political sense less will be attained than is possible to-day. We shall see shattered illusions producing a rebellious temper, beside which the July crisis was child's play. . . .

It is not that I think our dynasties are threatened with downfall ; but the monarchies must go under in the end,

[1] I have softened down some rather strong expressions in the letter.

unless they prove by leadership their call to rule. It would be the ideal situation for the monarchy if it set its face against excited popular passion and brought about a peace against which the demagogues protest but for which generations to come will be thankful. That would be an act of leadership. . . .

What a pity that Landrat v. Kardorff[1] did not enter the Chancellery. In that case at least the game at home would have been won. Kardorff is Conservative through and through. If the franchise reform is put off he foresees a general strike and the collapse of all that has made Germany. He said to me in so many words:

(*a*) The Government can win the round in the franchise reform question if it plays a bold game.

(*b*) The Government will lose the round if it continues to show its opponents that it will shy at the final consequences.

(*c*) Personal ambition is playing a predominant rôle in the opposition to the franchise reform. Members are anxious to retain their seats. On the other hand nobody believes that this Government will seriously tackle the fundamental change of system which was spoken of at one time. This change of system would mean that a large number of "Landrats" and "Oberpraesidents," etc., would go sky high.

(*d*) Kardorff's advice would be that a council of Ministers should be summoned and should decide beforehand that if the franchise reform is rejected there shall be an immediate dissolution and a thorough clean up among the Landrats and Presidents. This decision ought not to find its way into the Press in a threatening and provocative form, but should trickle through confidentially to the members, Landrats, etc., interested.

Then Kardorff, speaking from intimate knowledge of Conservative feeling, guarantees a swing round. But as it is the Conservatives see in Heydebrandt settled determination, a clear programme and a fighting attitude, but in the Government a weakness for compromise, cautious retreat, etc. How, for example, could Hertling in his speech in the Landtag lay stress on the fact that he had "sent first for Count Westarp." Instead of the Conservatives being forced into the defensive and given a good fright they fancy themsleves as the proud objects of a

[1] He was a Free-Conservative member of the Prussian Diet and spoke and voted for the equal franchise.

canny courtship. . . . The present [Conservative Party] Kardorff described as merely the representative of big landed property.'

The misgivings expressed here were only too well founded. The opponents of the franchise became more and more convinced that they had nothing to fear from Count Hertling in spite of his announcement on 5th December, 1917, that he would honour the solemn and repeated word of the King. After 19th January, when the Franchise Committee decided to consider the reform of the Upper House first, the delaying tactics could no longer be camouflaged.

At the same time the authorities went beyond the stage of passive resistance in their opposition to the Belgian declaration. A not very pleasant symptom of this change of mind was brought to my notice. Hahn was summoned to Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften and was instructed to cease his canvassing for a declaration on Belgium. He left it to his chief whether he should dismiss him but insisted on retaining his right to express an opinion on this vital question. Their intimate relations remained unaffected by this conversation.[1]

[1] It left its traces in a letter [H. to Haeften] of 20th January, 1918, from which I should like to quote the following sentences: 'I often think nowadays of one of the first talks I was privileged to have with you. We were discussing the postponement of the submarine war, the threatened disorganization in Russia, etc. You were then visibly impressed by Noeggerath's arguments, but refrained from making the military operation, which was now practically unavoidable, harder for the Supreme Command than it was already by eleventh hour warnings.' And then the letter went on: 'Our decision on that occasion saved the Entente from collapse. Without the prospect of American help the Entente was beaten with the Russian revolution. This bitter reflection gives me courage to submit my conviction once more to you. I see our country going to ruin and you in a position to save it. To-day's turning point will be definitely marked in history. . . . Will Germany ever be in the position to enforce a relation of dependence for Belgium? The answer is: Only on condition that we bring the enemy to such a pass that we can dictate peace. With the restoration of Belgium British self-respect stands or falls. To believe that the British will come to an understanding with us on Belgium is to despise your enemy. It is the same mood in which people say that the British will fight to the last Frenchman. The leading English pacifist, when he was demanding an immediate armistice and negotiations declared: "All the same, if the Germans should wish to retain Belgium, I will put on khaki myself . . ."'

The breach between the views of the authorities and of my Berlin associates was widening. We therefore thought of an attempt to bring some mild public pressure to bear.

The following comments were written for the *Deutsche Politik*. They give a lively picture of the state of feeling.

'One does not need to be a convinced believer in the new orientation to-day to demand the speedy fulfilment of the franchise reform. That nation whose war first ceases to be a people's war, has lost the war. The Conservative gentlemen must be warned that anyone who wishes to hinder the loyal fulfilment of the royal promise is tampering with the roots of our national strength; but strange to say even patriotic Conservatives are reeling into this danger. It is almost tragic how the instinct of statesmanship has vanished in Germany's leading circles. What would England give to-day, with the decisive battle approaching, if she could count on masses of workmen as loyal, as patient and as self-sacrificing as the workmen of Germany—always on the assumption that the Government wins their confidence. Time was when the British Conservatives made desperate and, thank Heaven, vain efforts to get the Labour leaders back into the Ministry. But in Germany a sigh of relief went through the Conservative ranks when the Hertling-Payer-Friedberg Ministry was formed—without its Social Democrat.

At bottom the cause of the Conservatives' passionate resistance to the abolition of the "three class" system is lack of self-confidence. They have in fact ceased to be aristocrats; they do not trust their own power to lead if it is to be no longer privilege but the confidence of the people that supports them. And so they have not the courage to shake themselves free from their unnerving class privileges. This lack of self-confidence is often unfounded: there is still the raw material in Germany for a Conservative People's Party.

For that matter the Liberals, too, lack their "lords of the battle cry." The words of the English historian Headlam in the *New Europe* cannot be read without a pang:

"We have long known these German Liberals—learned, doctrinaire, comfortable, argumentative—who have been lecturing and planning and writing and discussing for a century. But the one thing they have consistently omitted to do was to act. . . . The energy in propaganda and the initiative in action lies not with them, but with their opponents."

With matters come to this pass one involuntarily turns to the Crown for help. Just now the monarchical idea is passing through a serious crisis everywhere. If the Crown were to perform the act of leadership for which the people is longing but which the statesmen, intimidated by excited party passions, dare not perform, then that " kingship of the people " of which Friedrich Naumann wrote so finely in his book [1] would become a living reality overnight.'

On 27th January I received a new cry of distress from Berlin.

' Germany is in the greatest danger since the beginning of the war, in spite of our brilliant military situation. I do not think we need fear a defeat which enables the Entente to dictate peace. But there are ugly instincts lurking in the masses of the people, just as there are in Britain, Austria, and Russia. Secret collaboration is going on between them. We still have national barriers ; but they are thin, and one fine day, under the pressure of a general world depression and world scarcity these instincts will break loose and make a peace which will dash to fragments the only Germany that is able and worthy to fulfil her mission in the world.

Our country is more secure and better protected against the contagion of " disorderly democracy " than any other country. But if our enemies manage during the terrible months that lie ahead to fasten the responsibility for the continuation of the war on to our Government, revolutionary convulsions will certainly break loose. It is therefore necessary now to endorse the war as a war of defence. That cannot be done by constant reiteration ; this war must be *felt* by the people to be a people's war. It can only be so felt if we have a war policy which is championed by the Government in open opposition to the Pan-Germans and the annexationists. Lloyd George is the type of the British Pan-German ; he wants forcible annexations, he wants our humiliation. Alsace-Lorraine is his war aim. But he and his colleagues are to-day making speech after speech which enable them to pose before the British masses as adherents of the peace of understanding ; and they are doing this because they know that the war is lost for Britain if it becomes a Government war. . . .

Now, how does *our* Government behave ? For Germany the war was a people's war in August 1914. It can become a

[1] *Demokratie und Kaisertum*, Berlin, 1900.

people's war again. . . . We cannot pose as protectors in the East, we cannot desire that our strong arm shall be feared wherever wrong is done, if we ourselves wish to perpetuate a crying wrong by veiled annexations in the West. Our own people feels this. It is conscious that in this Belgian question our own sense of right is against us. It is conscious that only if we take our stand again on the old Bethmann position, can we meet a reconciled world round the conference table. The German people fears outlawry not by statute or by international convention but by that world hatred which no German victory can ever overcome.

. . . . But the most important result would be that we should see a new national uprising among the masses. We need this for two reasons. We need it to discourage our enemies, but above all we need it to make us equal to the unprecedented efforts of the coming months. As things are now going we should have an enemy in our rear during the offensive. Symptoms of weariness are making themselves felt everywhere. The happenings in Austria [1] were the hysterical outburst of a leaderless people. To-day there was a huge gathering on the Hasenheide on the occasion of the Kaiser's birthday, at which a new Government was demanded. There were not a few calls for the Republic. It is expected that in the next few days 80,000 munition workers will strike in Berlin. Precautions have been taken against sabotage.

Naumann mentioned in his speech the pamphlet calling for the general strike which has been broadcast in hundreds of thousands of copies. Even the Independent Socialists disclaimed knowledge of this pamphlet. But about a week ago another pamphlet was broadcast, signed by the best-known Independent leaders. It demanded in vague language that there must be an end of talking and that something must be done. There is a danger that this second pamphlet will be felt to be the commentary on the first—in which case the movement appears as the deliberate action of a Reichstag Party and is raised by such sponsorship to an importance which one would fain deny it at any price.

Now, who on the whole is to blame? Is it our underfed, shivering people, with a time of suffering behind it (and would that it were only behind it!) unexampled in history, or that hesitating Government which refuses to break with the Pan-German annexationists . . . ?

[1] On the disturbances in Vienna in the second half of January 1918 cf. Czernin, *op. cit.* p. 322 ff.

The springs of our moral strength in this war are failing. All can still be saved. . . . In this connection I lay the following facts before Your Highness :

1. The Anti-Psychologist [1] has the feeling to-day that what I am here demanding must happen. His friends say that he is now taking things very seriously and is conscious that he did not take them seriously enough earlier ; but he refers to insuperable obstacles from the praetorians.

2. I assure Your Highness that these obstacles are superable.

(*a*) The programme which I am advocating has so far been submitted by the politicians to the said quarters only in an atmosphere of international fraternizing. The whole soldierly instinct rebels at this.

(*b*) The methods are entirely " diplomatic." There is never, as there ought to be, any wish to fight the matter out in open discussion. I know that it has been said : " Let them fight and let them beat me, if I'm wrong." They're all afraid of a heart to heart talk between man and man. In certain quarters there is a feeling of being diplomatically handled and a sudden desire to kick and smash things up. I am not surprised. Valentini's dismissal [2] is a sign of passionate tension of this sort. Everything will now be patched up again.

I think that . . . the historic hour has come when the Kaiser must save his people. Franchise reform in defiance of opposition . . . unequivocal declaration on Belgium. . . .

The only possibility I see is that the Kaiser should intervene. I know that the Kaiser, if he wants, can carry everything through against the opposition of the Supreme Command, but the Kaiser must place himself on the people's side, otherwise the authority of the monarchy is at an end.'

On 28th January, 1918, and the next few days about 180,000 men in Berlin struck work. The leaders of the trade unions had no hand in the outbreak of the strike. On the contrary, the old Social Democratic Party did everything they could to hold the men back. For months they had been hammering in the truth that Bolshevism meant the collapse

[1] Herr v. Kuehlmann. By ' things ' the British peace movement is meant.

[2] Chief of the Civil Cabinet, who was dismissed at the request of Ludendorff at the end of January 1918. He was succeeded by Herr v. Berg, a man of Conservative leanings.

of all ordered freedom; but the Russian contagion was at work in the masses. The January riots were Trotski's work. Chief prominence was given to the demand for 'the rapid conclusion of a peace without annexations and without indemnities and on the basis of the right of national self-determination in accordance with the proposals of the Russian Commissaries of the People.' Once the strike had begun the trade unions joined in to prevent the movement being perverted into open hostility to the war.

On 5th February the strike collapsed, thanks to the energetic measures of the military authorities, who were effectively supported by the Home Secretary, Herr Wallraf. The rapid restoration of order did not, however, justify any undue feeling of security. We had to face the fact that all of a sudden an ugly and dangerous temper had appeared. The distrust would eat its way further. People would begin to ask, Will the Kaiser keep his word? May not the Government, stimulated by the improvement in the military situation, end by backing out of the promised franchise reform as gladly as out of the peace resolution?

It seemed to me that these questions had to be cleared up so unequivocally that even men of ill will should no longer have a handle to throw suspicion on the Government; otherwise we should be ill prepared for the battles of this year.

I seized an opportunity which presented itself to get into touch with the leading men.

On 31st January Lord Lansdowne had again given a sign of life,[1] a very shy one, it is true, and the Foreign Office suggested that I should answer him. To be sure I counted on my words having but little effect in England. Only the declaration on Belgium, and it coming from the lips of a leading statesman, could give the Lansdowne movement the fillip for which it was waiting. But I thought I could not say 'no' to the desire of the Foreign Office. Not that I had

[1] A speech which he made to journalists and authors who presented him with an address in honour of the service which he had done the country by his letter in the *Daily Telegraph*.

any intention of taking over the ready-made draft which was sent me. The object of this colourless concoction was hard to see.

I told them that I must be exactly informed on the military and political situation before I spoke. When I reached Berlin on 13th February I was met with the astonishing news that ' my interview ' had appeared in Karlsruhe the day before. The transmission of the official draft to the branch offices of Wolff's Telegraph Bureau had been ordered simultaneously with its dispatch to me. The Karlsruhe representative, in an excess of zeal, had released it too early, without awaiting authorization from Berlin.

I was at first very indignant, but consoled myself with the reflection that the colourless phrases would never be noticed and therefore required no *démenti*.

Dr. Mantler, director of the Wolff Bureau, then obtained the following interview from me on 15th February :

' . . . From the Russian revolution two roads led : one to order, toleration and freedom, the other back to murder and massacre by edict. The alien peoples in Russia were determined to take the first road and were fighting to-day for their existence against the representatives of the other policy. Here Germany had to make up her mind between peace with the Bolshevists at the price of abandoning the nationalities which were setting their house in order, and peace with these border peoples, who only ask for one thing, namely, to be allowed clean conditions in which to consolidate themselves. I rejoice at the way the decision has gone.

The Bolshevists, in so far as they consist of idealists, are fighting for an idea. This idea can be summed up in three words : " destruction of nations." Wherever they see citizens of different classes and ranks joining forces for the accomplishment of a national task, it is their desire to wreck and ruin. That is as true of Finland as it is of Germany, France or Britain. Their aim is no more and no less than to make Finland's fate the fate of Europe.

It has been Germany's historic task to oppose a bulwark to the destructive forces which threatened from the East. We did this on the Lechfeld in 955, at Liegnitz in 1241 and at Tannenberg in 1914. Hindenburg's victories were not only Germany's victories ; they were Europe's victories. The man

who does not understand this, does not understand the real ground of our wrath against England. I can never forget the satisfaction with which England pictured the Russian steam-roller crushing Germany in 1914 and 1915.

And now once more we must be on our guard against the great danger which is threatening from the East. A moral infection is about to be launched.

When there is a menace of cholera or plague—and these dangers are not confined to the past—then all civilized states must take common quarantine measures. The one ambition of the diseased Russia of to-day is to import its disease into all healthy and convalescent states. It is time that people had made up their minds regarding the necessary measures of defence.

In the first place Trotski proclaims a world destiny which he intends to bring about. Ideas must be fought with ideas. True, we are fighting for our existence and for the possibility of our economic development. But the ideal of self-preservation, if it stands alone, leaves great human resources untapped. To the freedom-destroying world order of Trotski we must oppose a world order which protects freedom. Germany must cheerfully acknowledge that the happiness and the right of other peoples find a place in her national will. It is not only inside our frontiers that our name must be in good repute. All great nations must aim at a world order in which their name is mentioned with fear and with hope wherever wrong is done. Here Germany must not renounce her moral influence in the world. That would be to aim at a peace of renunciation.

As a second measure of security we must make our German organism as healthy and as resistant as possible. For this all the conditions are present.

Behind us lies a national uprising without parallel, a common effort, common suffering and unprecedented experiences of peril and of rescue such as could not fail to weld a people together even if that people did not exhibit so uniform a structure as the German. But to-day there are forces at work whose object is to break up the German organism, forces which fall into line with the diplomatic offensive which our enemies pride themselves on having undertaken for the shattering of our home front. I am thinking chiefly of those groups who have never been touched by the Fourth of August spirit, who have been labouring year in year out to destroy our faith in the justice of the German cause and to put Germany in the wrong at home and abroad. As was inevitable in a war of such length, these

groups have been joined by many despairing and embittered people. But the great mass of the German working classes fights with a sound and healthy instinct against the attempt to weaken Germany's defensive power. I therefore deplore the agitation which aims at branding and isolating wide strata of our population as unpatriotic. War aims must be the subject of hot dispute in every country, but I want never to miss an opportunity of repeating what I said in Karlsruhe, that we must cease in our internal disputes always to look for unpatriotic motives in our political opponents ;[1] such charges should never be heard even as controversial weapons. They are a sin against the front and the spirit which rules there. There men whose views on war aims often diverge widely risk their lives every day, in a common effort, and in complete mutual trust. No fit man should shirk the duty of keeping this feeling of community alive at home as well, otherwise we are endangering our immunity from the Eastern contagion.

I have here before me an English newspaper which reports that the British Trade Unions have invited Lord Lansdowne, the old Tory leader, to address them. A similar readiness on the part of our old parties to move with the times is a national demand.

The third and the most effective measure ot defence would naturally be peace.'

My visitor asked me for my view of the prospect of an all-round peace. I replied :

'The key to the situation lies with the Anglo-Saxon peoples. Here it is very difficult to see clearly. The news from America is contradictory. I will not attempt to anticipate the answer which the Chancellor is to give to President Wilson ; I will confine myself to pointing out that in his last speech[2] the President does not speak as judge of the world.

"The United States has no desire to interfere in European affairs, or to act as arbiter in European territorial disputes . . . She is quite ready to be shown that the settlements she has suggested are not the best or the most enduring. They are only her provisional sketch of principles and of the way in which they should be applied."

These words are significant ; all would be won if the peoples had got so far as to speak to one another in a Christian spirit, without claiming infallibility. The American newspapers

[1] See above, p. 191. [2] Speech of the 11th February, 1918.

present a different picture to President Wilson's speech. It looks as if Reuter had handed over to the Americans his entire used-up stock of war-mongering copy. The war hysterics of the American Press remind one of the state of feeling in the Entente countries in 1914 and 1915.

It is equally difficult to gain a clear conception of opinion in England at the present time. Lord Northcliffe and Reuter regard it as their first duty only to show Germany the England with which there is nothing for it but a fight to the death. True, we hear the sound of other voices, too. But the really decisive question still is: What is the relative strength of the opposing tendencies? This question I cannot answer.

But one thing is certain. The War Council of Versailles once more declares that the decision must be by force of arms. There are many parallels which give food for thought between the situation at the end of 1916 and the situation to-day. Then, too, there were strong currents in England—the *Morning Post* let out the secret that they reached as far as the Cabinet, and even gave the names of their representatives—currents which favoured a peace by negotiation, a peace, however, that could be reconciled with the honour and safety of England. Lloyd George realized that his great offensive, the offensive to which he was so looking forward as war minister, was threatened, and delivered the "Knock-out" speech [1] which summoned the war passions of all countries to his aid. And so we had the campaign of 1917. To-day again there are men of all parties in England who are looking round for a way out—a public conversation between statesmen has just been proceeding, comparable to the discussion between Grey and Bethmann on the League of Peace in 1916—and then the Versailles Council meets and rejects the idea of negotiation, and England pledges herself to the reconquest of Alsace-Lorraine.'

Here Dr. Mantler objected that several hints had come from neutral quarters that Lloyd George had changed round; when speaking of Alsace-Lorraine he had used the word 'reconsideration' in contrast to his former challenge *à outrance*, which was implied in the demand for restoration. I replied:

'My attention, too, has been called by neutral friends to such symptoms of recovery. I was referred to his speech to the

[1] 28th September, 1916 (the 'boxer' interview).

trade unions [1] and to the earlier speech at Glasgow in which he expressed his willingness to leave the question of the colonies to a conference. I was sceptical from the outset. Lloyd George's name has been entered in the annals of history for good and all as the exponent of " Knock-out " militarism, of the unbending will to annihilation. When such a man suddenly appears to be searching for a bridge to the enemy, two explanations inevitably suggest themselves. The first is, that Britain is so weak that Lloyd George shrinks from the responsibility of a further continuation of the war. The second is that Lloyd George wishes to fool the German and British adherents of the peace of understanding in order to smooth the way for the war whose continuation he desires. The first explanation I at once rejected. This scenting out of signs of weakness in the enemy is one of the illusions which are always prolonging the war. How often have our enemies seen signs in Germany of an immediately impending collapse. We would rather not fall into the same error. The moral resources of a nation whose war is a people's war are practically inexhaustible. But the second explanation, that of insincerity, seemed to me to meet the case and events have proved me right. For a few short weeks Lloyd George put on the sheepskin of the pacifist—only to get rid of the embarrassing garment with unseemly haste at the first opportunity.

Otherwise how explain the great haste with which they went to work in London and Versailles ? Lord Robert Cecil did not even wait until he had read Hertling's speech before he declared it to be an unacceptable basis. And yet the main points in its programme were :

1. The integrity of the territory of Germany and of her allies, and also the renunciation in principle of an economic war.
2. The forcible incorporation of the conquered territories does not form part of Germany's intention.
3. On all other points we are ready to negotiate.

But negotiations are precisely what our adversaries do not desire. This dread of the conference table provides an infallible touchstone for the war aims for which the enemy Governments are striving. If a man is confident that his own claims will pass muster before his people, he can shoulder the risk of negotiations, for, after failure, he can come before his people again and call upon it to fight for the aims which through the fault of his adversary could not be secured by way of negotiation.

[1] 5th January, 1918, see above, p. 212 ff.

Only he who fears that negotiations will show up the corruptness of his own demands and the innocence of the enemy's, need shrink from a conference—as the criminal does from the court.

Well, Lloyd George and Clemenceau have decided for the campaign of 1918. A feeling of responsibility to humanity ought to have demanded that the hell of this year should not be let loose until an honest attempt was made to find out whether the differences between the belligerents had not so far vanished that negotiations could bridge them over. To me it seems possible, and even probable, that this attempt would have come to grief. But an enormous burden would have been lifted from every man with a conscience. We should have known where we stood. In a certain sense we know that even now. Mankind must face the campaign of this year, which must needs be the bloodiest of all—because it has been so decided in Versailles.'

Dr. Mantler asked me whether Lansdowne's speech did not appear to point the way out.

I replied :

'The expression "clean peace" has a fine sound. It is a sound idea that as a preparation for peace agreement must be reached on certain general aims, aims which stand out above the crowd of separate ambitions, and belong not to one nation but in a sense to all peoples. Here all public discussion is helpful.

1. I will begin with the demand which has its roots deep in the history of the German people, the demand for the freedom of the seas. The principle underlying the freedom of the seas asserts that non-combatants by sea and by land must be spared the sufferings of war. There must never be another hunger war. The safeguarding of the freedom of the seas would mean more than the humaner shaping of future wars—it would be a guarantee of peace, since the prospect of being able to misuse sea-power with impunity is one of the greatest temptations to war.

2. The world must not be rent into two groups of powers which outbid each other in armaments. We must be guided by the aim which the Chancellor accepted in November 1916, the aim of co-operation between the peoples for the prevention of future wars. But the moral conditions for this will only be present when a change of heart has taken place in the life of the nations, when the peoples strive to pass from antagonism to co-operation.

3. The first sign of this change of heart would be an all-round acceptance of commercial peace. The peace must not become a continuation of the war by other means.

4. The coloured populations, too, must not be regarded as a means to an end. Their " right to be an end in themselves " has already been demanded,[1] and must be recognized. The opening up of Africa must be based on a feeling of responsibility towards the black race and a consciousness of solidarity in the white race.

5. These aims are aims which concern humanity ; they will enforce themselves irresistibly in all countries. He who stands by them will be the victor ; he who betrays them will go under.'

[1] By Solf in his speech of the 21st December, 1917. ' I should like to make a slight change in the expression " right of self-determination " (Selbstbestimmungsrecht) ; I should like to say that the natives have a " right to be an end in themselves " (Selbstzweckrecht)—they have a claim to be treated at all times by the more highly developed races as an end and not merely as a means.'

CHAPTER IV

MY STRUGGLE FOR THE INITIATION OF A POLITICAL OFFENSIVE

(February-March, 1918)

Soon after my arrival in Berlin I visited the military section of the Foreign Office. Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften informed me that the offensive had been decided on. Unlike many civilians with whom I spoke in the next few days, he was exceedingly grave. He expected much from the offensive, but not everything. He spoke of it not as the great event that was bound to bring us peace and victory, but as a stern necessity. ' We cannot come to an understanding with the British until we have beaten them once more.' He added : ' In any case the defensive would cost us more men than the offensive.' [1]

I insisted once again that what our interest really demanded was a peace of statesmanship *before* the offensive ; but that if our enemies remained obstinate it would then be highly important to make a clear statement on Belgium so as to break their internal morale for the coming clash of arms. Haeften agreed ; and also agreed with me that no matter whether one liked democracy or not the reform of the franchise must be taken energetically in hand before the beginning of the operations, simply for military reasons. We could not afford at any price to enter the trial of strength with a cleavage among the people.

[1] Haeften's point was not quite conclusive. He, and through him General Ludendorff, had already received news at the end of January (see p. 264, n. 2) that the British, in view of public opinion at home, could not undertake an offensive on the Western front this year and that therefore a defensive plan of campaign would be adopted. The alternatives which faced us were therefore not ' offensive *versus* defensive against an enemy offensive,' but rather ' offensive *versus* relative quietness on the Western front.'

While I was with Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften, Haussmann, the Member of Parliament, was announced. He came straight from Switzerland and told us of two diplomatic moves into which he had been drawn. [1]

In Geneva he had been put in touch with Professor Herron, an American. In his telling style he described to us how Herron could only speak of President Wilson with the awe inspired by a Prophet; how Herron had described himself as having been initiated by the great man and had then assured him with a holy oath that Wilson would at once take up the question of peace as soon as the Chancellor, Count Hertling, had unreservedly accepted his Points in a public speech. Haussmann remembered the English of this solemn affirmation. It must indeed have been impressive to remain in Haussmann's memory, for he knew not a word of English. In the purest Swabian he quoted us the words: 'As sure as Christ was nailed on the Cross, Wilson will make peace.'

Haussmann himself did not appear to take this move very seriously, but he was absolutely convinced of the man's good faith. In this he was right. After the war Herron regarded it as a debt of conscience to give public expression to his indignation at Wilson's betrayal of his own ideals.[2]

Haussmann attached more importance to a matter which a Dutch pacifist living in Switzerland had brought to his notice: [3] It was proposed that three leading members of

[1] Cf. Conrad Haussmann, *Schlaglichter, Reichstagsbriefe und Aufzeichnungen*. Frankfurt a/M., 1924, p. 176 ff.

[2] 'I believed profoundly, indeed religiously, that America's participation in the war would so transmute its whole motivity and conclusion as to render it the last great war. . . . Later—and this is what so sternly concerns me now—I made these Germans really believe, as I myself really believed, that the Fourteen Points would be precisely applied. . . .

Not since the sorry tale of man began to be told, has such power for good, for universal change upward, been in the hands of the single mere man (Wilson). And history presents no mortal tragedy comparable to the failure of this man to capitalize—diplomatically and spiritually and at its full value—the power so confidently and universally thrust on him.'

(*The Defeat in the Victory*. By George D. Herron. Cecil Palmer, London, 1921.)

[3] Cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 172 ff.

parliament from England and three from Germany who were working for a peace of understanding should be brought together in Switzerland. The Dutchman professed to know that the British representative in Berne, Sir Horace Rumbold, had taken an interest in the project. 'Yes,' said Haeften, 'to stop it.' And in fact Haussmann received news a few days later that the Englishmen had been refused their passports.

All the same, the present situation may well have given British diplomacy food for thought. It is in any case a fact that the Allied military attachés in Berne were looking forward with unwonted anxiety to the coming decision in the field.

The most important piece of information brought us by Haussmann was the expert opinion which Hermann Stegemann had written down for him on the military situation.[1] Stegemann was against the offensive. He put its military possibilities very high, but not high enough to justify hope of the capture of Calais.

The pith of his opinion was contained in these sentences :

> 'I have repeatedly pointed out that in this war the strategic threat has a more powerful effect and is easier to turn to political account than the completed operation. This is true in quite a special measure of the offensive now imminent in the West. It is beyond question that the Entente's war will and feeling of solidarity has undergone a certain slackening, accompanied by great nervousness. I have definite grounds for saying this which I am not allowed to mention, but which are based on definite knowledge.'

Stegemann concluded with the words :

> 'Germany must meantime reckon with the possibility of losing Austria and Bulgaria—to say nothing of Turkey—on the

[1] Cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 171. This expert opinion of Stegemann's (that the military result of the offensive would be the capture of Amiens and Rheims and its political result a failure) was laid by Haussmann before Ludendorff but received only a 'delphic' reply. (*Aus Conrad Haussmanns politischer Arbeit*, Frankfurt a/M., 1923, p. 105). These 'Gedanken zur Lage, von Hermann Stegemann am 16 Februar 1918 fur Conrad Haussmann niedergeschrieben' ('Thoughts on the situation written down by Hermann Stegemann on the 16th February, 1918, for Conrad Haussman') have been printed : *Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Vol. II., 1925, p. 96 ff.

way. A clearing up of the Belgian question (my *ceterum censeo*) will facilitate an understanding ; and only if this understanding does not come about within a few weeks, must the double-edged weapon of the offensive be employed. The suitability of this weapon as a surgical instrument remains doubtful ; but its use would then be recognized to be necessary. This is not yet the case.'

Haeften then instructed his English expert Hahn to give us a résumé of the reports which had been submitted to the Supreme Command during the last few months. Hahn's résumé was as follows :

' Lansdowne is the only man who can overthrow the " Knock-out " Government and its policy. To-day he is paralyzed by our behaviour at Brest-Litovsk and by Lloyd George's apparent swerve to the moderates. But he would again become a power as soon as German policy succeeded in unmasking Lloyd George.

Serious unrest is at present weakening the British home front. Two sources of weakness are continually operative, depression caused by the military situation and the movement in the war industry.

People think they are not being well led. The dispute between the " Eastern " and the " Western " school is still being fought out in the Press, as if the enemy were not listening.'

Hahn gave prominence to the following facts :

1. ' Lloyd George is to-day a declared adherent of the Eastern school. He has in General Wilson a military associate whose opposition to Haig and Robertson is well known.

2. The tension between the Prime Minister and the General Staff is so notorious that on 24th January, 1918, Pringle could venture to ask the question " whether the Press attacks on Robertson and Haig were being inspired from 10 Downing Street ? " On the other hand it is an open secret that Colonel Repington, whose opposition to Lloyd George caused his resignation from the *Times* on 21st January, is in close touch with the General Staff in his continued attacks on the " amateur strategy."

3. In this dispute the public is overwhelmingly on the side of the civilians. In the Press it is taken for granted that the British losses in 1917 were greater than those of the French.

Haig is accused of " butchery " and of having obstinately insisted on the continuation of the " break-through " offensive, although its futility had been proved by Nivelle's failure and rightly recognized by Pétain.[1]

4. There are signs that the plan for a " break-through " offensive on the West in 1918 has been given up.

The victory of the " Eastern school " is indicated by the following facts. Firstly, " Student of War " [2] no longer speaks as the exponent of an opposition group, but in the obvious expectation that the plan which he supports is going through in the war council. This plan is :

A strategical defensive in the West. Postponement of the offensive till the Americans can throw their weight into the scale, that is, not earlier than 1919.

Preferential treatment of the shipyards in the distribution of man power.

The dispatch of reinforcements to Asiatic Turkey to force a decision.

A great diplomatic offensive must go hand in hand with the military undertakings. Its object must be :

The detachment of Turkey, Bulgaria and Austria, and the incitement of the German masses against the war.

Secondly, Lloyd George appoints his friend Sir Henry Wilson as representative on the Supreme War Council at Versailles, and not " General Non-Non," as the French call Robertson. The ill feeling is intensified by the position given to Foch. He is already Chief of the French General Staff and French representative on the Supreme War Council and in addition is selected as Commander of the new reserve army ; this gives him the right to dispose of Haig's reserves.

[1] These attacks were made also in Parliament. In two sittings of the House of Commons at the end of December and at the end of January a number of speakers made sharp attacks on the Army Command. Commander Wedgwood, a naval officer, said : ' Six months ago we had a magnificent army in Flanders, but the recent failures at Paschendaele and Cambrai have damaged the morale of our troops to a great extent. . . . In my opinion there must be a change in the command. . . . Sir Douglas Haig is a cavalry officer who has been too prodigal in throwing in his men. It is time another man were tried.' People talk of the ' scandal of Cambrai ' and demand the results of the investigation. Feeling in the country is so distrustful of the General Staff and the officers in Supreme Command that according to the *Manchester Guardian* an election fought on the programme : ' No interference by civilians in military affairs ' would certainly be lost.

[2] *Manchester Guardian* of 12th January, 1918.

5. The " Western " Press is furious. The General Staff in London, they point out, has been practically eliminated. The powers given to Foch are attacked and it is pointed out that while victory is possible under an allied general, defeat is not. That the Alliance would never stand.

6. This point of view cannot prevail ; but behind it there stands a reality—the prestige of the British army. This feeling is strong enough to prevent Foch becoming generalissimo,[1] although the Americans, French, Italians and Lloyd George's own conviction demand this solution.

The discord among the authorities carries confusion into the ranks of the population. It is in any case already agitated by the effect of the submarine war. For months people in England have had to endure what we call inconvenience and they privation. The queues in front of the provision shops are spreading an ugly spirit. The work-people are naturally hardest hit and are demanding compulsory rationing. Lloyd George is taking a serious view of the social discontent ; this is shown by the fact that he has offered Smillie, the miners' leader, the office of Food Dictator. Smillie declined it and gave his reason to the Labour Congress at Nottingham : he would have had to demand authority to string up all profiteers without judge and without trial ; and this Lloyd George would not have given him.

Here we have the gesture of the Bolshevist.

The row came in the middle of January. The new Conscription Act notified the munition workers that their indispensability was at an end. When Sir Auckland Geddes introduced it (15th January) he threatened the shirkers with the hatred and contempt of the whole country : " you want to live out of danger while your fathers are sent to the trenches and the wounded have to go out again ! " The House cheered this challenge. But the munition industry took it up. Resolutions poured in from Woolwich, from the Mersey, from Manchester, from the Clyde, repudiating Geddes' demands and appealing for a determined opposition to any further claim on the man power of the nation, unless the Government accepts the war aims of Labour and agrees to an International Labour Conference . The pampered munition workers, with their indispensability

[1] ' An Allied generalissimo was not appointed,' replied Bonar Law to a question by Asquith which was clearly inspired by the General Staff. Havas adds the remark : ' There is nevertheless reason to believe that the decision which has been come to differs little from the appointment of a generalissimo.'

now threatened, were everywhere taking up the Russian catch-words of peace without indemnities or annexations and an immediate armistice. Through the noise could be heard the class war battle-cry, " conscription of wealth."

The most significant symptom is the disquietude of the war parties. Conservatives advise the Government to go a long way to meet the A.S.E. : it is suggested that the " dilution men " —the unskilled and half-skilled workmen—should be called up before the aristocrats of labour, the highly qualified engineers, were withdrawn from work which was of such vital importance in the war.

The Liberals implore the trade unions not to make an undemocratic use of their power. Henderson speaks of the most ominous industrial situation since the war began and attempts to mediate. The crisis is not yet solved. Its issue depends on whether Lloyd George succeeds in smothering the peace talk.'

This information convinced me that action must be taken at once. The depression in England must not pass without use being made of it.

I visited Count Hertling to convince him of the necessity of a peace offensive which could not fail to heighten the effect of the military offensive, even if it did not make it unnecessary. He did not see eye to eye with me. He would, he said, support any step which brought us nearer peace ; but a declaration on Belgium would certainly not help us forward on the road to peace. The enemy would answer with mockery and scorn. He was able to point to official declarations of the Entente Governments and refused to believe in a public movement in Britain which was favourable to peace, to say nothing of our power to influence it. At bottom the idea was intolerable to the Chancellor that he should be the man who stayed the hand of the Supreme Command. He had unbounded confidence in the two army commanders. They would, he believed, create a military situation from which peace must automatically result, and that a better peace than was attainable to-day.

Herr v. Payer was not in principle opposed to my suggestion ; but he had now definitely acquiesced in the prevail-

ing opinion that the great successes which were coming would break the war will of the enemy. He could also, he said, understand the anxiety of the soldiers lest Belgium should become an enemy base in a future war.

I put the question whether any ' securities ' would justify the loss of hundreds of thousands of German lives. He answered : ' The offensive has been decided on, and we must leave it at that.'

Herr v. Kuehlmann did not share the optimism of the rest. He believed neither in the miracle of the offensive nor in the declaration on Belgium, nor that the Generals could be induced to agree to it.

Another Minister was present at our conversation. He had in his day been definitely on my side in the war aim question, but now he said : ' I, too, have become more annexationist than I was.'

Among the Secretaries of State Solf was alone in his conviction that our silence on Belgium was a sin beyond repair. He saw the unique opportunity clearly, but he had been giving good advice in vain for years and had no hope that he would carry his point now.

Solf arranged a meeting between me and Rosen, our ambassador at the Hague. This experienced diplomat had had many dealings with the British and French and knew them well. He was convinced that only force could settle the question of Alsace-Lorraine between France and us. The French would fight for the lost provinces with a dogged passion until they were forced to despair of victory. He still maintained that before the war the Germans and the British had been very near to an understanding. Great as war passion certainly was, there was no clash of vital interest between Britain and Germany even to-day. To induce France to renounce her war aim there was only one way, and that was to weaken the war will of Britain. Then the French would cry out : ' Nous sommes trahis ! ' and would see an honourable retreat from the war.

I saw Herr v. Bethmann in my hotel. His view, held without any reservation, was that we ought only to begin the

offensive, no matter how much we expected from it, after a clear utterance on Belgium. He, himself, did not believe that the enemy would be forced to their knees, and always repeated the question : ' What then ? '

He spoke with complete intellectual assurance, without a trace of the *maladie du doute*. I could not escape the feeling that if Bethmann were now in office, he would not this time resist his better judgment as he did in January 1917. That is only done once in a career. The German people is only too ready to label its public men. There is a lack of the magnanimity which allows that they may learn from their errors.

Herr v. Bethmann went in person to the Chancellor and implored him to act. He returned with an air of resignation saying : ' I am afraid that they have not thought the situation out.'

And so our cause in Berlin seemed to be lost.

My associates still hoped for something from an attempt which had been made on 11th February to influence General Ludendorff. They had succeeded in getting Alfred Weber, Robert Bosch, Friedrich Naumann and the trade union leaders, Legien and Stegerwald—a really weighty combination—to sign a very earnest appeal which ran as follows : [1]

> ' The bloodshed in front of us is colossal. The German people will endure it if it feels that the enemy leaves us no other choice, but only then. Our offensive must—in a political sense—be not the offensive of the German General Staff but the offensive of Lloyd George, forced on us by him. Even from the military point of view this is a healthy feeling. The enemy will put up a poorer fight and his home morale will snap if the war he is fighting is an aggressive war ; in other words, if it is fought for Alsace-Lorraine. British Labour has made it clear that it will not agree to the man-power demands if the war

[1] Alfred Weber and Hahn were the authors of the memorandum. It has been printed : *Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs. Entstehung, Durchfuehrung und Zusammenbruch der Offensive von* 1918. Vol. I. : *Gutachten des Obersten a.D. Schwertfeger : Die Frage der politisch-militaerischen Verantwortlichkeit*. Part I. : *Bis zum Beginn der Offensive* 1918 (21st March, 1918), Berlin, 1922, p. 129 ff.

is to be continued for imperialistic aims.[1] An aggressive war waged by the enemy is what Germany needs for the rallying of her forces. Our population consents to the offensive only as an absolutely unavoidable act of defence against the enemy's desire of conquest, just as it consented to the war in the first instance. To-day it is the task of policy and strategy to make the inevitablity of this offensive, if come it must, a living reality to the popular feeling. Willing devotion at home as well as at the front is the necessary condition for the success of any great military operation, and this devotion is to-day seriously threatened. On the other hand, if we succeed in unmasking the war which the enemy is conducting as a war of conquest and thus saddle the enemy with the responsibility for the offensive in the eyes of the German public, we shall once more be able to draw on all the moral resources of the nation.

Let us then ask two questions :

1. How is it to be made clear to the German people that the responsibility for the offensive rests with the enemy ? ; and
2. How is it to be made clear to the enemy peoples that it is avoidable and is being brought about only through the fault of their Governments ?

The answer is :

This is to be done by means of a German political offensive which compels Lloyd George to declare publicly that he wants to continue the war for the sake of Alsace-Lorraine. This object can be attained by means of an unambiguous declaration on the future restoration of the sovereignty and integrity of Belgium. This is the postulate of the British and American peace party. Lloyd George's whole object is the prolongation of the war because he knows the consequences of such prolongation for us. A German declaration on Belgium would force him to declare openly that he wishes to continue the war for the sake of Alsace-Lorraine. So long as there is ambiguity on the Belgian question he will always succeed in making the masses believe that this war is really still being fought for Belgium. And thus he gives the war which Britain is fighting the deceptive appearance of a war of defence.

This declaration on Belgium would destroy the solidity of the home front in enemy countries and would create it anew in Germany.

[1] The British masses have so little desire to fight for Alsace-Lorraine that Pichon's speech which interpreted Wilson's statement on Alsace-Lorraine in a French sense, was suppressed by the British censorship. (Note from the memorandum.)

. . . This step is necessary for the further reason that there is an enemy political offensive at work, whose object is to fasten the responsibility for the continuation of the war on the German Government in the eyes of the German masses. Lloyd George's use of the word "reconsideration" in regard to Alsace-Lorraine was of course thoroughly dishonest. He wants separation and not, say, autonomy within the German Empire. But his words were chosen to produce the impression in Germany that he had already, at heart, given up Alsace-Lorraine. And thus, unless we make a counter-move, it can easily come about that the enemy will scatter *our* forces while he rallies his own and thus do away with the necessary condition of a German victory in the coming decisive battle.

The possible results of the proposed political move may be summed up: either

1. The peace parties in England with our unequivocal declaration on Belgium in their hand, succeed in overthrowing the war Government and putting a peace Ministry in its place; or
2. Lloyd George's war Government succeeds once more in forming a die-hard Ministry in opposition to the popular will.

Either alternative is favourable to us.

In case 1: The German people, if peace is concluded now, will enter upon peace proud of their State, and would still maintain that feeling towards the army which is essential if we are to remain strong in the future. But this feeling is bound to be lost beyond recovery if the suggestion eats its way further into the people that the Supreme Command, and, under its pressure, the German Government bears the responsibility for the continuation of the war. Our people's power of resistance to revolutionary unrest would then collapse, and collapse finally.

In case 2: A military dictatorship under Lloyd George would be the worst imaginable obstacle to the British war effort. The people's war in Britain would have become at one stroke a Government war and could not fail to end with the decisive defeat of Britain. The temper of the working masses would end by infecting the front, and our soldiers would have an easier task.

But Germany would be protected against all internal unrest, for our war would again have become a people's war.'

This warning closed with words which have been called 'truly prophetic.'[1]

> 'A terrible responsibility rests to-day on the Government. The good will of the masses can still be saved. All the healthy forces among the workmen would fain repel the elements which aim at disorganization. But the Government must help them. It is in the power of the Government either to allow the disruptive forces to become a great destructive power in Germany or to condemn them to lasting impotence.'

I was under no illusion. How should the commander in the field be shaken by a memorandum[2] when his decisions were regarded even in Berlin as immutable laws of nature and followed now with extravagant hope and now with secret dread?

Since the decision had gone for the offensive our statesmen were no longer men in action: they had become spectators.

I resolved to run down to Kreuznach to have a talk with Ludendorff himself. Herr v. Bethmann wished me luck. If the General, he said, was having one of his good days, one could say anything to him.

I spent 19th February at Kreuznach. The Field-Marshal did me the honour to meet me at the station. I knew him from of old and had served a few months under him when he commanded the division in Karlsruhe. I felt the better, as I had always done, for the strength and the calm which he shed around him. You could not help feeling safe in his presence; you felt that no enterprise to which this kind, sage, steadfast man had given his blessing could possibly go wrong.

General Ludendorff I saw that day for the first time. He first received me before lunch in his office. There he explained the military situation on the map. One shared his relief that the ring around us had been broken and that all his enterprises in the West could no longer be spoilt by

[1] Cf. Schwertfeger, *op. cit.* p. 80.

[2] Haussmann, *Schlaglichter* (p. 185) states that Ludendorff's answer to this memorandum was: 'The choice does not lie between war and peace but only between waiting and acting.'

sudden straits on the Eastern front. You felt in him the daring leader, ready in the end to stake everything on a single card. True, his belief in his star shone in his words ; true, you were startled when he was asked, ' What is to happen if the offensive fails ? ' and answered, ' In that case Germany must just go under.' [1] But my general impression remained that Ludendorff's sense of responsibility was as great as his daring. I felt justified in having spoken sharply to a prominent Austrian a short time before, when he wanted to make Ludendorff's ambition responsible for the coming offensive. Even to-day I feel certain that the great decision had its birth in heroic inner struggles without the slightest clouding of his judgment by personal motives. You could still feel, that day at Kreuznach, that the General shook inwardly ; it was like the quivering of a man's frame after a bodily effort which has gone beyond his strength.

His mood was much rather ' I must ' than ' I will.' I go further and say that I found in Kreuznach a greater readiness to re-examine the foundations of the decision than I found in Berlin. The Generals did not look on their own resolutions as decrees of Fate.

This morning I was a listener. Only when General Ludendorff pointed out that the efforts of our war industry were an element in victory, did I interject that it was nevertheless desirable that he personally should not be brought into any sort of connection with the iron industry in the Press. He scouted such a connection. I maintained, however, that even the appearance of a political understanding should be avoided for the very reason that close touch between him and the industrial magnates was a necessity.

After lunch I laid my view of the political situation before the General. I told him all that lay on my mind. I said that even overwhelming German victories would not force the Allies to knuckle under ; they could keep the campaign going until America threw in her whole strength. I said that

[1] I have often remarked subsequently that these words were taken wrongly. Ludendorff's view simply was : ' Our situation is such that we must either win or go under.'

matters being so the declaration on Belgium must be made, and made now ; it would bring us peace or help us to victory, for in any case the British people would be rent into two halves ; and if we were obliged to fight on, our blows would strike harder. In my opinion the responsibility of refusing, in our isolated position, to use this powerful explosive was a responsibility that no man could bear.

General Ludendorff listened with interest and finally asked me whether I could guarantee that my programme would achieve what Germany needed. I replied, that I could not, but I should like to ask him the counter-question : Could he guarantee that the offensive would achieve what Germany needed. He answered that neither could he do that, ' but one must trust in victory.' Then I said : ' In that case my position seems to me to be the stronger, for if my attempt fails we can throw in the whole strength of the army, but if the projected offensive does not attain its object, we cannot strike again with the same weight.' Then the General spoke of his desires in Belgium. What he was chiefly set on was a close economic attachment of Belgium to Germany ; the temporary occupation of Liège, too, was desirable. But here it was quite clear that this need not be his last word. The conversation ended without result. But of this I am certain. If instead of me Count Hertling had appeared before him that day with a demand for the declaration on Belgium, and had been obviously ready to hand in his resignation unless the Army Command withdrew its resistance, General Ludendorff would have given in ; and the consent of the General Field-Marshal would not have been in doubt.

I could only telephone to Berlin that I had met a certain measure of understanding—in other words :

' My move has been a failure ; Ludendorff will not take the initiative ; everything once more depends on the Government.'

The Chancellor made a big speech in the Reichstag on 25th February.

The speech was meant to be conciliatory. He quoted with approval words spoken by Runciman, a member of the

Liberal opposition who had recommended that there should be a meeting of a few people to begin negotiations, and then spoke on Belgium :

> ' Here I am thinking especially of our position in regard to Belgium. Over and over again it has been said in this place that we do not think of retaining Belgium, of making the Belgian State a component part of the German Empire, *but that we, as was pointed out in the Papal Note of 1st August last year, must be preserved from the danger that a country* with which we wish after the war once more to live in peace and friendship *should become the object or the base of enemy machinations.*[1] The means of attaining this end and thus serving the general peace of the world might be discussed, as suggested, between a few people. If, then, a proposal in this direction were to come from the other side, say from the Government at Le Havre, we should not decline to consider it, although of course the discussion could not, in the first instance, be binding.'

An advance of that sort led no further : it was the tenth time that the Belgian declaration had stuck in the throat of a German statesman. If a message was to be sent over which should be of any use to Lansdowne, it must ring clear and carry far. The words must not so be chosen and so wrapped in deliberate ambiguity that the Pan-Germans could exchange significant glances over a formula which did not exclude subsequent claims for all manner of securities. From Le Havre, which ought under no circumstances to have been apostrophized, no proposal could possibly be expected ; to count on an official initiative from the enemy was simply to underrate the mortal enmity of the Allied Governments.

Was there still any hope that the Chancellor could be converted ? One's thoughts turned to getting help from our diplomats. More than one of our representatives abroad had again and again urged Berlin to make the declaration on Belgium. One could be sure that they were now extending their feelers more busily than ever. It might be the case that the nervousness on the other side was producing the contact which it had not been possible to establish up to now.

I therefore telegraphed to Berlin, urging my friends to follow the Swiss move [2] with increased attention.

[1] My italics. [2] See above, p. 247 f.

Was there anything more that I could do ?

I gave instructions that the case against the illusions which stood in the way of our policy should once more be summarized. Our plan was to proceed as follows : The first part of our memorandum was to admit all the false political hypotheses of the annexationists and then it was to be shown that even from their own point of view they ought to prepare the ground for the offensive by a moderate declaration of war aims.

I next wanted to warn people once more that our military and political situation would necessarily deteriorate even if we won, to warn them against the threatening defection of our allies and the strengthening of the Alliance, which was now in the throes of disruption. I wanted to show them how so favourable a moment would never recur, how we were at the climax of our military power, from which there could only be a descent ; how our victories were terrifying the world ; how our enemies were filled with secret dread at the genius of the leadership with which they were confronted and did not feel safe under their own leadership ; how the confidence of the liberated border peoples was going out to us ; how, in a word, the temptation of arrogance was irresistible and only to be avoided by a statesmanship that knew how to hold the reins. In conclusion—with no regard to tactical considerations—a profession of ethical imperialism. ' Not because we cannot but because we will not, hands off Belgian independence.' Now or never is our opportunity to reconcile the world to the power of Germany by our moderation. The whole memorandum was to bear the title ' Ethical Imperialism.' [1]

My friends in Berlin went to work with fire and faith—they did not see yet that the cause into which we were throwing ourselves was lost. Still, every time they looked up they could not fail to observe how one ally after another was being swept away by the wave of optimism. Men's minds were becoming hardened against every counsel which urged political action. On men's faces there was a glow of expectancy : ' When will it begin ? Even among the Social

[1] See below, Part II., chapter V.

Democratic masses one could hear a sigh of relief that Germany was no longer the stag at bay. At the bye-election at Nieder-Barnim, the Independent was beaten by the Majority candidate with a flourish of trumpets, and the *Vorwaerts* of 28th February gave the Nottingham Labour Congress, which had fired off a broadside of unacceptable peace conditions, a line of its mind. A Social Democratic leader summed up the sense of the article to some friends in the words: 'Well, well, they must just get another thrashing.'

And who could wish to interfere with this temper? The Army Commander needed it at the back of an army which was entering the decisive battle. It is no part of the duty of public opinion to scan the future with anxious eyes. But the directors of our foreign policy should not have relaxed their watchfulness. It was their duty to examine the international situation day by day to see whether it was not ripe for peace.

The reception of Hertling's speech in England should have made two things clear. The one was that much had been thrown away; the other was that everything could yet be retrieved.

Holt, a member of the House of Commons, raised the question of peace on 27th February; it was the second peace debate in the House within a fortnight. Balfour made a great speech in which he attacked the dishonest and brutal German policy with which no negotiation was possible. Hertling's speech was the main object of his indictment. The great dialectician went into it in detail and called the Chancellor's declaration on Belgium 'the touchstone of sincerity for the intentions of German diplomacy.'

> 'The hon. gentleman (Mr. Holt) knows . . . that the German attack on Belgium was unprovoked. He knows as well as everybody knows that it was not merely an unprovoked attack upon a small and unoffending nation, but that it was an attack carried out by one of the nations which had guaranteed the security of that small and unoffending nation. Those are the commonplaces of the situation. Those are historical propositions which everybody knows by heart.
>
> There is only one course for the offending nation to pursue

in those circumstances, which is to say, as they have said, " I have sinned." That they have said through the mouth of the former Chancellor. The next thing to do is to say, " Having sinned, I make reparation ; I restore again what I never should have taken, and I restore it necessarily without condition." What does the statesman who now meets with the unqualified approval apparently of my hon. friend say on this subject ? He says, " By all means restore Belgium. We do not want to stay there. But we must take care that it shall not become a jumping-off ground for enemy machinations . . ."

We know the sort of thing that Count Hertling has in mind. We know what a German always does mean when he talks of economic freedom and frontier security. He always means imposing some commercial trammels upon a weaker neighbour, or appropriating some of his territory in order to strengthen his own frontier. I am perfectly certain that if the hon. gentleman will take the trouble to look back through the various speculations on the question of Belgium, of which the German papers have been full ever since the beginning of the war, he will see, and he will always see, that by the phrase used by Count Hertling . . . they always have in their minds the restoring of a Belgium which shall be subject to Germany by various new conditions, either territorial or commercial or military, which will prevent her having an independent place among the nations of Europe.'

Imagine Balfour's embarrassment if by that 27th February the unequivocal declaration on Belgium had been made. As it was, he succeeded for the moment in giving new life to the moral indignation which had been since the beginning of the war one of the main sources of Britain's military strength. In the debate Runciman had once more spoken in favour of negotiations ; he abstained from voting.

But Balfour's tactical success had no deep effect on the country. Anyone who read the British Press carefully could not but conclude that the pacifists were not only speaking for themselves but giving expression to the discontent and disquietude of wide circles who had until now supported the war.

At the end of February compulsory rationing was introduced in Britain.

America proved disappointing. There was all the pomp

and circumstance of war, there were processions and fine speeches, but they could not do away with the fact that Britain had not yet been deblockaded by America and that the coming battle in the West, which many were looking on as the decisive battle, would have to be fought without the armed help of America.

But the main source of the depression which weighed on the British public was still their lack of confidence in their own army command. On 11th February, 1918,[1] Colonel Repington [2]—we now know [3] that he was writing in the name of the British General Staff—made a bolt into publicity. He revealed the fact that the ' side-show ' against Turkey had been resolved on at Versailles against the will of the British General Staff and on the initiative of Lloyd George, and demanded that Parliament should call for an explanation. He added that the Versailles War Council, in other words Foch, by obtaining the right to dispose of Haig's and Pétain's reserves, had been given full executive authority for the coming defensive campaign to which they found themselves limited for the present. The British General Staff on the Western front was thus eliminated, and Haig had been divested of his authority over the most important section of his troops.

On 17th February Robertson was dismissed and replaced by Sir Henry Wilson, who had up to now been British representative on the Allied War Council. The General Staff Press spoke of ' the British army's black day.' The commanders in the field had no longer the certainty that sound

[1] Repington's article was submitted to the Supreme Command on 20th February, 1918.

[2] Captain Wright, in his book, *At the Supreme War Council*, London, 1921, p. 69, makes a sharp attack on Repington. In his article of 11th February he had given away military secrets of the greatest importance, which had been guarded by the Supreme War Council with greater care than any other decision before or after, namely the renunciation of the offensive and the dispatch of reinforcements to Turkey to force a decision. But Wright is unfair to Repington. As early as the end of January, v. Haeften was in a position to inform General Ludendorff of the great secret of the ' side show ' from information supplied in an article by ' Student of War ' in the *Manchester Guardian* ' (cf. above p. 250, n. 2).

[3] Cf. Wright, *op. cit.* p. 68.

strategical principles would be adhered to and an imperturbable ' No ' opposed to mad-cap enterprises. In the defence of its position the ' Eastern ' Press also threw off all restraint. Robertson must go. He was an opponent of the Eastern plans, he was against a French commander-in-chief and the full powers just conferred on the Council of Versailles, which ' were necessary to assure unified measures of defence against the coming German assault.' A similar controversy blazed up over the choice of his successor. The one side expected great things of him, the other called him a mountebank and a creature of Lloyd George's. The despondency and bewilderment among the public had never been greater.

The British people were aware of the irreconcilable differences of opinion in the War Council and waited tensely for every word that came from Germany.

The British Foreign Secretary had twisted Hertling's declaration to suit his object ; but the discussion was still open. It was now the turn of the Chancellor. He did not take it.

I received news from Berlin that Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften had joined those who would no longer hear of a declaration on Belgium. As a soldier, he had made the ' sacrificio dell' intelletto.'

My friends still placed some hope in a reconnaissance at the Hague. The idea was that Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften should meet Noeggerath there. They had not seen each other again since the final hours before the submarine war when Haeften was urged by Noeggerath to try to induce the Supreme Command to agree to a postponement. Once again the last hour before irrevocable decisions had come. Two pieces of news had come to Berlin from the Hague :

> ' The first is dated 1st March. In two independent conversations Garret, the American ambassador at the Hague, has dropped broad hints that conversations are not impossible. In all probability Berlin will be informed of this through an official channel, and will be asked to send over a suitable man. A change of mind may occur at any moment and the risk remains open that the person sent may have his journey for nothing ; but as matters lie, it is practically certain that an

exchange of views will take place. Max Warburg seems to be the right man; he can go there without exciting comment and he has an exact knowledge of American conditions.

The other message is dated 4th March and says that it is desirable that Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften should come to the Hague to ascertain for himself what a disastrous effect the circumstances attending the extortion of the treaty at Brest-Litovsk had had. "They will make a clean sweep of the Allied peace movements."'

And so it came about that from 5th to 9th March Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften, Hahn and Max Warburg were together at the Hague. Max Warburg had had an interview with Count Hertling before he started and had been apprised of the German war aims.

The American ambassador took no steps to arrange a meeting with Warburg. The First Secretary of the Embassy would have been willing to have a private talk, but this Warburg declined, feeling that since a change of mind had obviously taken place at the Embassy the greatest reserve on the German side was indicated. I was told later that the Dutch Foreign Secretary, Loudon, had mentioned to Dr. Rosen that the revision of the peace of Brest-Litovsk was an American peace condition, and had received the answer: 'Pax non olet!'; and that this remark was regarded as a reason for proceeding no further.

I do not believe this. There was no serious will to negotiate in Washington, London or Paris. True there was great anxiety about the coming military decision which gave rise to nervous misgivings and corresponding instructions to representatives abroad, but this was only the panic of a day which a glance at the unexhausted reserves in men and material was sufficient to dispel. The Allied Governments would only have negotiated under the pressure of public opinion and it was our business to bring this pressure about.

Regarding the conversation between Noeggerath and Haeften, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Foerster states in his book *Count Schlieffen and the World War*[1] that entry on official

[1] *Graf Schlieffen und der Weltkrieg*, Berlin, 1921, Part III., p. 79. W. Foerster obviously depends on information derived from Haeften.

peace negotiations had been made dependent on the following conditions :

> ' Unconditional evacuation of Northern France and Belgium, payment of the cost of reconstruction, independence for Alsace-Lorraine, the declaration that the peace just concluded in the East is null and void, the reference of all Eastern questions to a peace conference to be summoned by the Entente and a complete change of the system of government in Germany in the sense subsequently demanded and enforced by Wilson.'

This version is erroneous. It says both too much and too little. Even if Germany at this juncture had agreed confidentially to all these conditions, the Entente Governments would not have opened negotiations. In my opinion official readiness for peace—assuming it ever to have existed—had already evaporated—otherwise the presence of Herr Warburg at the Hague must have been made use of by the American Embassy. On the other hand Noeggerath never intended to formulate these aims as conditions *sine quibus non*, whose acceptance must precede the beginning of peace negotiations, but as desiderata such as would be tabled by the other side, *if* negotiations were to take place now—the setting up of a Majority Government being merely indicated as a suitable step to smoothe the way for peace conversations. But the real value of the conversation lay in the information which Noeggerath gave regarding the state of public opinion in the Anglo-Saxon countries :

> ' If the German Government makes an unequivocal declaration on Belgium as part of a great programme of war aims which also clears up the peace of Brest-Litovsk, then peace

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I infer this from Haeften's statement before the Investigation Commission which also diverges in essential particulars from Noeggerath's version as it was communicated to me in March 1918. Above all Haeften is certain that Noeggerath demanded the overthrow of Hertling's Government as a preliminary condition to the opening of any peace conversations. This removed the whole proceeding so far as Haeften was concerned from the domain of practical politics. In the text I follow Noeggerath's version according to the practice followed elsewhere in this book : In a case where statement conflicts with statement and the bona fides of both the listener and the speaker is entirely beyond question to assign the greater weight to the recollection of the person who remembers distinctly that he said definite things. At least it is then certain that he meant to say them.

is on the way. The Anglo-Saxon peoples will in that case force their Governments into negotiations before the hell of this year begins.'

Haeften asked Noeggerath whether he was unaware that Germany had never been so strong in the West as to-day. For the first time we had the superiority in France. Noeggerath answered : ' We know that in America perfectly well. People are now counting on a great German offensive and on the capture of Paris. But do you think that that would mean the end of the war for the Americans ? It will only be the beginning.' Haeften replied : ' But the French will not hold out if Paris falls.' Noeggerath : ' Even then you can't force peace if your conditions are incompatible with the honour of the Entente nations. But the German people will certainly not see the offensive through unless you proclaim moderate war aims before it is opened.

This conversation might perhaps have brought about the turning point ; but the very next day Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften received fresh information of a different tenor which confirmed him in his natural disinclination to make trouble at the last minute.

Our military attaché at the Hague, Major v. Schweinitz, and von der Heydt, both very subtle observers of the international situation, had long conversations with Herr v. Haeften.[1]

They both started from the assumption that the offensive was a settled matter. Herr v. Schweinitz did not believe that an understanding with Britain was possible before it began. To-day the question of Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine stood between Britain and us. The obstacle of Belgium could be got over by a political move. Schweinitz urged that the declaration on Belgian sovereignty and integrity should be made before the offensive or immediately after it began.

[1] They committed their views to writing immediately afterwards, Herr v. Schweinitz in a military report, dated 8th March, 1918 (' Abriss meiner Haager Berichterstattung,' *Die Grenzboten*, Vol. LXXX., No. 50, Leipzig and Berlin, 1921, 343 ff.), which was forwarded to General Ludendorff ; Herr von der Heydt in a memorandum, ' A conversation at the Hague on 7th March, 1918 ' which I afterwards handed to the Chancellor.

We could certainly not continue the war until the submarines forced Britain to capitulate. To Alsace-Lorraine Britain was pledged by the Versailles agreement until France herself gave up her claim ; and only a beaten France would do that. We are capable of an offensive of such compass that we are in the position to hope that France could be brought to renounce Alsace-Lorraine. The offensive is therefore necessary.

Herr von der Heydt began with the words : ' The German offensive can apparently not be avoided.' But he urged an immediate move to exploit the offensive politically. This move must have a two-fold aim : In enemy countries it must weaken the Governments and strengthen the friends of peace ; in Germany it must make the united home front a certainty. To this end he proposed that a diplomatic document should be presented to the enemy Governments, in which the ' complete restoration of pre-war Belgium ' must be set down in so many words. ' Britain and America demand the restoration of Belgium as a sovereign state ; they will demand this and fight for it until they are forced to those precious knees of theirs.' At the same time the declaration of autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine must be made to anticipate the demand for a referendum. ' Regarding the East, the less said the better.'

These views agreed closely with the suggestions which we were making, but in important points both Schweinitz and Heydt came to a different result. Thus Heydt wanted to pass over the East as a sore point, while for us the new ordering of Eastern Europe was an essential part of the German programme. Schweinitz hoped that after a defeat the Allies would be ready to give up Alsace-Lorraine. We regarded British pressure on France as much more probable before the dreaded offensive began than later on, when the two comrades-in-arms had come through the ordeal together. The all-important point was that both Schweinitz and Heydt treated the offensive as a *noli me tangere*.

Lieutenant-Colonel v. Haeften felt there was a load off his conscience. General Ludendorff was now concentrating

all his strength of will and nerve on the coming decision. Haeften felt that he need no longer approach his superior officer with the heroic demand that the pros and cons of the offensive should once more be carefully weighed, and urge that circumstances might arise under which it should be given up. 'I will tell General Ludendorff that an honourable peace cannot be had just now.' Herr von der Heydt and above all Schweinitz had convinced him that an understanding with Britain was impossible until after the offensive. It was almost with reluctance that he took the last chapter of 'Ethical Imperialism'[1] with him when he set out for Spa on the morning of 8th March.

The same day news of a fresh letter by Lord Lansdowne reached the Hague, and it formed the topic of the day. It had appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of 5th March, 1918. What mattered all the secret information and theorizing as compared with the weight of this public manifesto? Lord Lansdowne asked Count Hertling what he had meant by his declaration on Belgium and almost begged to be provided with an answer such as he could use in England. He even went so far as to suggest to the Chancellor a suitable interpretation of his own words: 'Germany must be secured against Belgium becoming the spring-board of enemy machinations.'[2] Lansdowne wrote:

> 'The language has been adversely commented upon, and certainly suggests, particularly when read by the light of other German utterances on the same subject, the inference that what Count Hertling has in his mind is the imposition of terms which, by subjecting Belgium to onerous conditions, territorial, commercial or military, will prevent her from having an independent place among the nations of Europe.
>
> It is therefore worth while to examine the text of the Papal Note of 1st August, 1917, on which, apparently, Count Hertling relies for a description of the steps which would have to be taken in order to prevent Belgium from being used as a "jumping-off" place. The material passage runs as follows:
>
> "Plainly there must be on the part of Germany, a complete

[1] See above, p. 261, and Part II., Ch. V.

[2] For Hertling's exact wording, see above, p. 260.

evacuation of Belgium, *with a guarantee of her full political, military, and economic independence towards all Powers whatsoever.*"

If such a guarantee is really all that Count Hertling requires in order to prevent Belgium from becoming an object or jumping-off ground of enemy machinations, it ought surely not to be difficult to satisfy him. Let us hope that in the course of the " dialogue " which will, no doubt, be continued, he will tell us whether that is his meaning, or whether wholly different designs, unhinted at in the Papal Note, were in his mind when he penned his somewhat unfortunate phrase.'

Lansdowne's question was as clear and urgent as Asquith's question to Michaelis on 26th July, 1917.[1]

A discussion between Rosen, Max Warburg and Hahn in the Embassy at the Hague led to the following conclusion :

' It cannot be proved that the Lansdowne movement is strong enough to make possible an understanding with Britain now. But the attempt should be made : Lansdowne must immediately receive an unambiguous answer to his question.'

I have no doubt that Rosen reported in this sense to his superiors. He had long been pressing for the declaration on Belgium.

Herr Warburg left at once to inform the Chancellor of what had happened.[2]

Hahn came to Karlsruhe to report to me and to suggest alterations in ' Ethical Imperialism ' which had been made necessary by the discussions at the Hague.

The Chancellor spoke on 18th March. Not a word was said on Belgium. The speech ended with the words :

' There is as yet no sign in the Entente countries of the slightest inclination to put an end to the terrible work of war. Their aim still appears to be to fight on until we are annihilated. We shall not lose courage. We are prepared for the worst. We are ready to make further heavy sacrifices. God, who has been with us, will help us again. We trust in our just cause, in our incomparable army, its heroic leaders and

[1] See above, p. 143.

[2] The opinions of our group are contained in a memorandum with the title ' The opportunity which is once more presented to German policy by Lansdowne's second letter.' See Appendix II.

troops, we trust in our staunch people. But the responsibility for this bloodshed will fall on the heads of all who desire the continuation of this bloodshed.'

The shorthand report notes ' loud applause in all parts of the House with the exception of the extreme Left.'

Feeling among the initiated was different. I had the following message from Berlin on 19th March :

' Hertling's speech is looked on as a complete debacle—the door has been not only slammed, but bolted. Herr X. is deeply depressed, for in the recent conversation the contrary appeared to be intended. Reventlow is pleased—he now wants to march into Holland. The Pan-Germans can be paralyzed only by a strong programme based on an ethical foundation. Bethmann's words are ringing in my ears : " My feeling is that they have not thought the situation out."

I enclose Lansdowne's fine letter. We *have* let him down badly. I can only say that we are ungrateful to our great opportunities—the worst form of ingratitude.

Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.'

One might well doubt whether it was still worth while to send ' Ethical Imperialism ' to certain quarters. My friends, however, urged the following considerations, and I yielded to them :

' It may be that in to-day's temper and among to-day's decisions the warning will not be heard ; but the unheard warning (if it proves to be right) will then automatically bring the opinion which issued it into power—and that, too . . . in the first pause of battle, when the decisions come to be revised.'

On 20th or 21st March the memorandum on ' Ethical Imperialism ' was handed in at the Chancellery. I forwarded the work simultaneously to Imperial Headquarters. Herr von Gruenau judged it inopportune to hand it to His Majesty at this moment of growing tension. I understood his scruples.

CHAPTER V

'ETHICAL IMPERIALISM'[1]

What would our Situation be if Negotiations took place To-day?

1. Never has our military situation been so brilliant. Russia is eliminated. For the next few months there will be no big American army in France. As Stegemann puts it, the encirclement is at an end. Up till now it has always been our lot in this war that events on another front prevented us at the decisive moment from making the most of our military successes on the front we had selected. 'A big pack means the death of the hare'—these words expressed the feeling which again and again cheered our enemies and brought us deep anxiety.

2. To-day our enemies are nervous. Their nervousness springs not only from their estimate of our material resources; behind lurks the uncanny feeling that they are confronted by commanders of genius and incalculable resource. When Hindenburg became Chief of the General Staff, Repington could not help exclaiming: 'We cannot afford to take any liberties with the old Marshal.' The names of Hindenburg and Ludendorff are an immense source of moral strength to Germany, and an immense source of moral weakness to our enemies.

3. This feeling of the superiority of German strategy is specially depressing because distrust in their own strategy is so strong among our enemies. At five minutes to twelve Britain changes her chief of staff. The knowledge that such elements of uncertainty lay behind the backs of the Entente

[1] The memorandum is here abbreviated from the form in which it was composed as a *pro memoria* for the Kaiser and the Chancellor.

delegates would do us good and would do the Entente harm.

4. Stegemann says: 'The strategic threat yields richer political fruit than the successful attack.' To put it differently —whether we succeed at the conference table or not depends not on the war map but on the military strength which backs our demands. If the world wishes to assess our strength, it does not ask: 'What have you accomplished,' but 'What can you still accomplish?'

5. Should we find ourselves obliged at the conference table to say 'No' and then to strike once more, our negotiators would have a support in the country which they have not had before and will not have later. The longing for peace among our people is certainly very great, but it does not take hysterical or impatient forms. The casualty lists for months back have been short. Imports of bread are in prospect, and are having a reassuring effect. And not only at the front but also at home people are conscious of the powerful military trumps which we still hold in our hands. If, therefore, a peace which failed to take account of our military successes were demanded of us, our people would simply not understand it. Even among the Social Democrats the absurd demands of the enemy would meet a spirit of indignant pugnacity. Further, the Fatherland Party would to-day do our negotiators yeoman service. This party is convinced that Germany can create a situation in which she will be able to dictate peace. It would put continuous pressure on the negotiators to increase their demands and thus put an effective weapon in their hands. They could say: Look how difficult it is for us to hold to our moderate conditions before our own people.

Our negotiators would have to invent the Fatherland Party if it did not exist. Nothing would be more fatal than that its representatives should begin to show moderation in their war aims. To-day there are signs that the Fatherland Party has seen its best days. The National Liberals are sensitive to the pressure of popular disillusionment. The National Liberals have before now come very near to voting for the Reichstag resolution.

6. What would the home front behind the enemy negotiators be like if negotiations began to-day? Assuming that we put forward certain degrading conditions, our enemies will once more be in a position to break off negotiations and continue the war. But assume that our negotiators were to demand such an increase of German power as is compatible with the honour and security of the enemy peoples. In that case it is unthinkable that the enemy could suffer the negotiations to come to grief and demand of their peoples that they should face the German offensive. Only on these lines can one explain their dread of the conference table, which was so strong a feature in Balfour's last speech.

7. The Central Powers are still holding together (but for how long?).

8. Our enemies are to-day at variance with one another (but for how long?). The object of our policy must be to reach the conference table at a moment when Britain and America are showing an inclination to leave France, with her claim to Alsace-Lorraine, in the lurch. That is the position to-day.[1]

Our Prospective Position after the Offensive[2]

Here we must clearly define the kind of military success that we are assuming.

Possibility No. 1: We force the enemy into such a position that we can dictate peace to him.

I exclude this possibility. It could be realized only under one condition, namely that our military successes were accompanied by a collapse in the British home front which took the shape of a revolution, while Germany remained untouched by the revolutionary movement.

Possibility No. 2: Our successes are so trifling that our enemies feel themselves to be the victors. Suppose, for

[1] At this point the memorandum contains an analysis of the war will and the war aims of our enemies which is omitted because it has become sufficiently clear in the course of our narrative.

[2] The military situation pictured here, and the political conclusions deduced from it, contain a source of error. A German defeat in the field was never reckoned with; only the extent of our victory was discussed.

example, that we achieve no more than the British did on the Somme or we at Verdun—I exclude this possibility too.

We consider only the *third possibility*. We achieve roughly what we achieved in Italy, dealing magnificent blows and capturing a large number of prisoners and an enormous amount of war material. Then comes a deadlock enabling our enemies to rally and by holding the bridge-heads of Calais and St. Nazaire, to draw out the campaign (as Stegemann predicts) until the help of America has arrived. If negotiations came about at the beginning of this deadlock, what would be our position at the conference table ?

1. Our war map is better but our military strength less.

2. Our biggest trump, the coming offensive, has been played. The enemy knows the worst and has borne it.

3. It is very probable that we should have lost one or other of our allies. To-day our differences of opinion can perhaps just be bridged over, but every month of war widens them. Next to the Russian, the Austrian organism is the least capable of resistance.

At a time when it will have become clear that we are not in a position to reconquer Palestine and Egypt great difficulties are to be feared in Turkey. Even now the British advice : ' Reimburse yourselves for your lost provinces by clearing the Germans out of the territory that still belongs to you ' is catching on. Britain's military prospects in Turkey are difficult to calculate.

4. Our enemies are no longer at variance. France will not be abandoned in her hour of need. Her detachment is therefore unlikely. The straits that she is in will probably drive her to negotiations, but in these negotiations the Entente will act together.

(*a*) It will have become impossible for America to leave the Entente in the lurch. Much American blood will have been shed for Alsace-Lorraine. X. expects the casualty lists to seal the final attachment of America to the Entente. If the negotiations fail, America would continue the war with all her energy. It is true that Wilson, as war organizer, would be shelved. But such a discomfiture of our least pleasant

opponent will only be a sentimental solace. The American war-machine would continue to run under other and better management.

(*b*) New ties will have been formed between Britain and France.

This new Entente will make a general attack of a diplomatic character on our democracy. How will our people react to it?

Whatever the result of our offensive may be, illusions have been fostered among the people which are bound to lead to a strong reaction. Large numbers of people are expecting that the enemy will be forced into a position in which peace is a matter of life and death to him. 'Our negotiators,' they would say, 'must bring peace home with them.'

In winter the people always recover from the effect of the casualty lists. The toll of blood which Germany will have to pay this time will perhaps equal that of Verdun. The fifth winter of war is at the door in all its grim significance. The danger of epidemics must also be mentioned here.

This will be Germany's mood when the diplomatic attack is launched. The ground will have been prepared for a diplomatic attack by Cabinets under Henderson and Thomas. So long as Imperialists like Carson and Lloyd George parade the hypocritical jargon of self-determination and world-salvation our Social Democrats are shielded by their distrust. But the trouble is that Thomas and Henderson are honest. They would not even shrink from applying their principles to their own countries.

5. And here we touch the Achilles heel of the Central Powers. In all countries the sense of common nationhood is being undermined by the sheer length of the war. The day is coming when the national barriers will collapse and the leaderless peoples will mingle like waters in flood. Then there will be no stopping. The bloodless revolution of Europe offered by Henderson, Thomas and Scheidemann, will achieve the same result as the bloody revolution of Trotski would achieve—a democratic peace which carries German Imperialism to its grave before it is born.

Our conclusion is as follows :

There is a Lansdowne Ministry waiting in England for us to help it into power. If we do not seize this opportunity, it will in all human probability never recur. Be this opportunity great or small, it is there and ought not to be left untried.

And so the declaration on Belgium leads either to a peace of statesmanship, which so far as can be foreseen can only be had to-day, or to a statesmanlike war which knows how to handle the political weapon as well as the military, and thus relieves our soldiers of part of their heavy task.

The Form in which the Belgian Declaration should be Made

Much naturally depends on the form in which the Government makes the declaration on Belgium. We propose a form of words :

' We desire that Belgium shall be independent of Germany and also of all her other neighbours.'

But here an essential point emerges : The Belgian declaration must not be made in isolation. Neither must it be made as the chief item in a manifesto. Both courses would mean making concessions to the Entente who want as it were to force us into the rôle of the penitent sinner. The declaration on Belgium must find its place in a great declaration of policy which lays down for the first time the ethical foundations of German Imperialism. Our claim to power has until now always been founded on the safeguarding of our existence and of the vital interests of Germany. The underlying assumption was that the world took a special delight in the vital interests and existence of Germany. That was a fallacy. The tremendous strength which we have displayed in this war must find moral justification in the eyes of the world, if it is to be tolerated. We must therefore make aims common to humanity a part of our national purpose.

There are several items of policy which must be outlined in this context. They must be so presented that

the charge of duplicity and dishonesty can no longer be raised :

(*a*) Our mission as the liberators of the East must be clearly outlined, and at the same time the Entente methods must be denounced without mercy ; every single sin of commission or of omission committed by the Entente, in their cringing before Tsarism, against the oppressed peoples, must be nailed to the counter. We must make it clear that we mean to act honourably by all the border peoples as the protectors of their rights.

(*b*) The Entente must be branded as the destroyer of the small nations. (The pressing of Italy, Rumania and Greece into the war. Quotation of the words 'Our protégés and jackals.'[1]) When our mission in the East is clearly seen to be a mission of liberation, the natural fruit of the spirit which determines our action in the East will be to renounce a policy of violence in the West. This is the proper framework for a declaration on Belgium.

(*c*) Other aims which concern humanity, demanded alike by our interest and by justice, must find expression. 'A colony is a mission field' (claim to colonies). Freedom of the seas (protection under international law of non-combatants by sea and by land. Recognition of the submarine as a legal weapon of defence against Britain's misuse of sea-power). Acceptance of the idea of a League of Peace but not until the present temper of the Entente has been overcome.

Let us now for the moment accept the position that only German control of Belgium can offer us the necessary securities.

Here we must first solve the preliminary problem, what must our situation be before we can force such peace conditions on the Anglo-Saxon world ?

The reply is : We must bring England and America into the situation in which Russia is to-day. Nothing but a situation in which we can dictate peace as we have dictated

[1] See above, p. 76.

it to Trotski can put the Anglo-Saxons in such a plight. We must never for a moment forget in our struggle against England that the British Empire is held together by its prestige as much as by its sea communications. After Ramsay Macdonald's declaration on 24th May, 1915, that no Englishman with a scrap of honour would consent to give up an inch of Belgium, everyone who knows anything of England, must realize that England would commit suicide just as surely by abandoning Belgium as she would by acquiescing in an interruption of her communications. A warning is needed against the prophets who are declaring that England would soon get tired of it if she got ' another good one on the jaw,' and would then agree to a compromise with us on Belgium. They are the same prophets who said of the British expeditionary corps at the beginning of the war : ' Good old bug-shooters ! Let them all come. The more the merrier ! ' They are the same people who laughed at the idea that England would ever turn out a voluntary army of millions or introduce conscription, and who assured us after conscription had been introduced that it would not produce an efficient army ; the same people who said with such contempt about America : ' She will never take it seriously and can't do us much more harm as an enemy than as a neutral.' These prophets should not be listened to any longer. If anyone demands of Germany to-day that she shall retain a hold on the coast of Flanders or on other parts of Belgium, he should realize clearly that he is asking Germany to make up her mind to fight England to a finish.

The Question whether German Control of Belgium can be reconciled with our Vital European Interests

With Belgium under German control we should be disqualified for our task of liberation in the East. The coming weeks will be decisive for our whole position in the East. It is not enough to-day that we should declare to this or that people individually or to all in common : ' We do not desire

to lay hands on your rights!' We must give clear evidence that we respect justice not from any consideration of opportunism—because this country offers us bread or that a good naval base—but because we have a certain ethical outlook which compels us to act thus and not otherwise. It must be believed of us that we have a right to come forward as the guardians of right. We are already being hampered at every step by the distrust of the border peoples. All the small nations have a strong feeling of solidarity. The readiness with which we sacrificed Polish interests in the Ukraine, has not only embroiled us with the Poles but has also brought on us the distrust of the Ukrainians themselves. Their representatives have said quite openly in Berlin: 'If only you don't mean to annex us!'

We repeat that reassuring declarations in individual cases cannot put an end to this distrust, which is being fostered by the Entente at a prodigious outlay of money and brains. Clearness in the Belgian question is here too a decisive step.

German Imperialism

The wave of democracy threatens to wash away the foundations of all Imperialism. This threat is specially dangerous to German imperialism, which does not yet exist and has still to be created. The foundations of British Imperialism reach back into the dim past and are no longer called in question by the public opinion of the world. But to-day Germany must begin laying down the foundations of her imperialism in the full light of the world's sharpest criticism.

It may therefore be said that if German Imperialism is to withstand the assault of democracy with its claim to a better world it must base itself on ethical principles. Democracy has no difficulty in dealing with the claim to power as such. The war has given us the opportunity to establish our right to power.

1. Before the war the world was portioned out; wherever we wished to secure an extension of our political power, we found foreign powers and prior claims in possession.

Especially in Europe the cuirass in which the Congress of Vienna has deliberately clad us, had begun to pinch us.

2. England had a better name in the world than we. She stood in our way everywhere. The eminent services rendered by the enterprise of individual Germans must not blind us to this fact. They were not acting as the Englishmen were as representatives of a national ethos. Fontane could say with justice (in his poem 'Civis Germanus sum'): 'When shall we, too, see the proud day dawn when we can say: "Fire, but don't hurt the flag."'

That day has come.

1. We have burst the cuirass of the Vienna Congress. The destinies of whole peoples have once more come up for decision. Vast territories on our borders have been set free. New states take shape, and call out for support and protection. There no one has so good a right as we. We are their neighbours and their liberators.

2. England's good name is waning. The rôle of moral leader of the world is vacant. America or we can succeed to England's heritage.

A word on the secret of British Imperialism.

England has never founded her claims in the world on the fortune of war alone; she has always convinced the world that England's power serves justice and freedom. Only so could the world tolerate and even abet an island people of forty-five millions bringing the best portions of the earth under its sway. Two factors have played a decisive part in forming this world opinion:

(*a*) When England went forth to prey she always 'preserved her world conscience in opposition.' When England was doing wrong men and groups who were potential holders of power have always protested loudly as the representatives of a better England and fought and suffered for their conviction. These representatives of the better England often came to power subsequently and healed the wounds which the British sword had dealt. Thus Campbell-Bannerman made a moral conquest of the Transvaal, against whose forcible conquest he had for years been foremost in protesting. And

so it came about that England weakened the world's moral power of resistance to her deeds of violence by making it possible for the world to say that England's victims would in the end become reconciled to English sway and even happy under it.

(*b*) England's great political programme, had it stood alone, would not have created this world opinion. She needed and produced a large number of administrators whose character and whose daily conduct of affairs embodied the English principle that the happiness and the rights of other peoples were a part of England's national purpose. Lord Cromer took Egypt's part as only a man who loved the country for its own sake could do. The individual Englishman often felt it to be his duty to protect the rights of oppressed peoples, even where his country had no sovereignty and he himself no authority. In the last Armenian massacre before the war Major Doughty Wylie saved the lives of thousands of Armenians at the risk of his own life by the mere authority of the British uniform. 'Fire, but don't hurt the flag.'

England's ethical imperialism has gone to pieces during the war. If we set about it as we ought we may hear a laugh of scorn echoing round the world if England ever again poses as protector of the small nations. By her alliance with Tsarism she has given support to the policy of annihilation directed against the alien peoples in Russia. She rejected the appeals of Russian Liberalism for her intervention in favour of the alien races by appealing to military necessity. For the same military necessity England has renounced her historical rôle of upholder of the dignity of the white race. True, we too have been silent when our allies committed crimes; but as yet we have only professed to be fighting for our existence and not for a better world.

Our existence is now assured. We can now confidently include in our programme aims which concern humanity.

But here a warning is necessary against the view that we could imitate England's method—first to deal wounds and afterwards to heal them.

Of the capacity to heal wounds our history has so far

given no evidence—on the contrary, we have succeeded, after we have dealt wounds, in interfering with the natural process of healing. But we are in the happy position that we can honestly inscribe on our banners the principle of Right; we need do no wrong in order to extend our power. We are in a position to say: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.'

We had right on our side when we broke up the Russian Empire; we had right on our side when we guaranteed the liberated peoples their national freedom; we based ourselves on right when we demanded a colonial empire in Africa corresponding to our colonizing capacity. We have right on our side when we demand the abolition of militarism in Africa in the interest of the white as well as of the black race.

We have right on our side when we strive for a rally of the continent of Europe for the protection of the freedom of the seas and desire to place our submarine war and the submarine in general at the service of this aim of humanity.

Between us and the right there stands only the Belgian question. Everywhere else in the world our manifest interest goes hand in hand with the interest of mankind. But we are not in a position to prove this solidarity between the interest of Germany and the interest of mankind without clearing up the Belgian question. So long as we operate here with secret reservations we go on presenting England with opportunity after opportunity to enter the lists as the protector of right and to re-establish her moral position at our expense.

Like England we, too, need for our imperialism more than a great national programme—we need the men whose character will be the proof of our national ethos. This war has produced a new type of German. Before the war the worlds of thought and of action were only too often distinct and hostile camps—he who could think could not act, and he who could act could not think. That has been changed during the war. Out in the field there have sprung up leaders in their own sphere who had never before known

heroism except in the life of thought. Now a desire is stirring on all sides to take a share in the common cause. There are men to-day who are willing to lead their fellows along the road to which they once were content to point. The fortune of war has done us a service in making this new type of German known all over the world. How much the doings of our German cruisers have meant for our ethical imperialism, only history will show. Of Herr v. Mueller the official organ of the British Government said at the time : 'He has done us great moral damage.' We may well believe it when we learn that he warned the crew of a ship released by him of the extinguishing of the lights of Calcutta—extinguished against him—and an Indian paper said : 'Herr von Mueller is a *sahib* ; for he spared the women and children.'

Many others have done similar service at the outposts for our good name. The other day it was the Hussar patrols in Livonia and Esthonia, who pressed forward with superhuman efforts and with no thought of their own safety wherever there were men to rescue and to protect.

Destiny is clearly tracing out our national mission, and we have the men who can justify it to the world. All we need is the creative act of statesmanship.

The road which was pointed out in this memorandum was not taken by German statesmanship. And so the policy of ethical imperialism remained untried.

In the retrospective judgment the actual events of history have a weight of their own. Even to-day the conclusion that a peace of understanding was entirely out of the question has almost the force of a dogma. The historian, unless he is saved by a political temperament, is at bottom a fatalist, and believes that because a thing happened, it had to happen. Further, many men who are playing their part in the formation of public opinion have an interest in denying that the war could have been ended by a peace of understanding ; there are first of all those who think that Germany's tragic downfall is easier to endure when they invest it with the

inevitability of fate, and next to them there are the accomplices who worked in Germany or the Alled countries to prevent the peace of understanding. For the peace of their own souls these men must clear themselves of the guilt of having prolonged the war. Nor, finally, is it hard to understand why those opportunists in the Allied countries who were only temporary adherents of the peace of understanding, are at no pains to acknowledge that it was only from faintheartedness that they desired to stay the hand of the soldiers.

I will now deal faithfully with the dogma that there was no middle way between victory and defeat. I have often asked myself whether my associates and I founded the policy which we advocated on false assumptions. In the last resort we always come back to the question whether the only England that counted was determined on Germany's destruction from the beginning ? Would England have consented to any peace which did not bear the unmistakable stamp of a German defeat ?

From the beginning of the war there were groups in England who demanded that the diplomats should get to work. But they only rose to importance when the trade unions had been set in motion by the Russian revolution and statesmen of Conservative leaning wished to put an end to the war in order to escape the ' red peace ' and the consequences which it would entail for the existing order of society. Lord Lansdowne, as we must now acknowledge in retrospect, was principally moved by considerations of foreign policy. He foresaw that the continuation of the war would lead to the development which has actually taken place : the financial preponderance of America and the military preponderance of France. He was afraid that a decisive defeat of Germany would upset the ' balance of power.' The same anxiety lay at the root of the statesmanship which he himself had advocated and applied. It was he who when he was Foreign Secretary had given up the policy of ' splendid isolation ' and sought an alliance with France in order to maintain the ' balance of power,' and it was he who, as leader of the Conservative opposition, again to maintain the ' balance of

power,' had demanded Britain's immediate entry into the war in August 1914.

During all four years of the war the philanthropists and pacifists had nourished the British peace movement with many good words and good intentions, but from the beginning of 1917 the backbone of the movement was the soberest type of political realism. I must, however, admit that over and over again during the war the voices of the moderate groups were drowned by war passion. Whenever victory or its imagined approach threw England off her balance, whenever defeat wounded the pride of the country, or the craving for revenge demanded satisfaction—in all such situations England saw red. It was this national infatuation and not political realism that carried Lloyd George into power and kept him in power. But in the pauses of fury and battle, when an ordeal had just been endured, when the bloody summer campaign came to an end and once more failed to bring the looked-for decision, or when at the end of a winter a new series of battles was due to begin and serious misgivings were expressed regarding the possibility of a military decision or regarding the strategical skill of the commanders in the field—at such ' psychological moments ' the German Government would have had no difficulty in forcing a public trial of strength between the adherents of the peace of understanding and of the ' Knock-out ' policy.

At the same time I feel sure to-day that this trial of strength would have had a different result from what we then imagined. We had always reckoned with only two alternatives : the downfall of the ' Knock-out ' Government or the hampering of Britain's war effort by the fact of Lloyd George having forced its continuation against a strong opposition. Looking back I believe that a third result would have been more probable and that the course of the peace crisis would have been somewhat as follows. After the German declaration on Belgium the adherents of the peace of understanding would have publicly demanded the beginning of negotiations. The answer of Lloyd George's Government would have been an appeal to British honour, not to disappoint

France in her national hopes. But the call for peace would not have been silenced. The retort was ready to hand: 'It is better for France to satisfy her claims in Alsace-Lorraine in so far as they are just by way of negotiation than to send fresh hundreds of thousands to their death. The attempt should at least be made.' This cry would have won the day, especially as it would have found an echo in France as well, who in 1917 was in danger of devouring herself 'like a pyre.' In such a situation Lloyd George would have swung into line. He was too clever to force the continuation of the war at all costs against the trade unions. That I had underestimated the man's versatility and resourcefulness I only realized after the war, when Lloyd George's policy of blood and violence in Ireland had run on the rocks and he suddenly and with wise audacity changed his course and concluded the Anglo-Irish peace. And so I believe to-day that at a given moment he would have dropped his 'Knock-out' policy and taken the road leading to negotiations. But these negotiations would have differed in an important respect from what we then foresaw. England felt herself pledged to support France's claims, less through treaties that always tacitly presupposed a favourable war situation than by their brotherhood in arms. Even if the cession of Alsace-Lorraine was out of the question for an unbeaten Germany, a serious concession would have had to be made on our side, otherwise the negotiations would have come to grief. The march of events would probably have forced the cession of the purely French parts of Lorraine. And so the restoration of Metz to France in return for important colonial compensations would have been the sacrifice that Germany in 1917 or in the spring of 1918 would have had to make for the peace of Europe and the Franco-German understanding. Whatever appearance such a fair compromise would have had in detail—I certainly do not think that the negotiations would have ended without leading to a result. Not only would those at home have urged the negotiators forward on the way to a peace of understanding; the army, too, would have exerted an appreciable pressure. True, the soldiers had grown accus-

tomed to unspeakable suffering as part of the day's work, they fought and died and never reasoned why. But they would do so only so long as peace seemed beyond their grasp. The moment negotiations began the spell of war was broken and the diplomats on both sides would have felt an overpowering pressure to show a reasonable spirit of give and take.

After America's peace move had suffered shipwreck and she had entered the war on the side of the Allies, the initiative for peace could only come from Britain or Germany. I confess that I at one time expected that the British Government under the influence of the moderates would resolve to set the great process of world healing in motion. I would fain have seen Germany, rather than Britain, in this rôle and remarked at the time that we were now in for a *pax Britannica*. I am still convinced that the country which brought about the peace of reconciliation would have won a position in the world which was not to be measured by territorial gain. It is tragic to think that Germany stood on the threshold of the creative act. Our enemies err when they say that our Supreme Command would never have permitted the public declaration on Belgium so long as fortune favoured our arms. I think I have proved that a determined and insistent Chancellor in the period from January 1917 till March 1918 could have secured the consent of the Supreme Command. The soldiers would certainly not have been uninfluenced by tactical considerations ; perhaps their main hope would have been that the step we proposed would bring not peace but the 'smashing of the British home front' as numerous memoranda had promised.[1]

Illusions, too, might have lurked in the background that one day an understanding could be come to with Belgium on the subject of Liège. Military and political thinking naturally proceed by different paths. But once the declara-

[1] In all the memoranda of that period, intended for the Supreme Command, it was natural that expressions should be used which took account of military mentality. It would have been unwise to use the words 'peace' and 'understanding' too often ; the chief stress had to be laid on the 'smashing of the enemy home front.'

tion on Belgium had been issued, even General Ludendorff could no longer have interfered with the peace of justice. The statesman who decided to act would have found an overwhelming movement behind him. For the trade unionists, without whose good will the war, so far as Germany was concerned, was lost, Legien and Stegerwald had spoken clearly enough.

But the roots of our ethical imperialism struck deepest in the army. It was not for nothing that the Netherland Hymn of Thanksgiving [1] became a German national anthem at the beginning of the war. Along with ' Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles,' it was the favourite soldiers' song. The young volunteers, as they marched away, believed in Germany's mission in the world and desired ' that Justice should conquer.' The peace of Right was ripe, but was not harvested. And the cause was bad will on the other side and blindness on ours.

The missed opportunities of the years 1917 and 1918 have not only decided the fate of Germany but have thrown human history back for centuries. The great phrases : League of Nations, sacredness of treaties, rights of the small nations, self-determination no longer ring true after the hypocritical misuse which was made of them in the Peace of Versailles. But I should like to recall the fact that Wilson himself had in his day laid down the psychological conditions which

[1] ' Wir treten zum Beten vor Gott dem Gerechten . . .'

The following is a free rendering in the metre of the original :

' We pray to the Just God His folk to deliver,
His Judgment is sure and His Purpose is set ;
The righteous no longer shall bow to the stronger :
O praised be His great Name ! He doth not forget.

He steadfastly willeth that Justice shall conquer,
Our God in the battle upholdeth our line ;
The fight is beginning—and lo ! we are winning :
Thine, God, hath been our Cause, our victory Thine !

O Lord of the Battle, we praise and adore Thee !
For help in the future our prayers rise to Thee :
From foes who enslave us deliver and save us :
Thy people entreats Thee : O Lord make us free.
Lord make us free ! '

[Tr.]

were indispensable if the genuine 'League of Nations' spirit were to come into being.

'No victory'—no overwhelming triumph of the Entente or of Germany.

History has justified the President's demand. If, at a moment when the generals on both sides still believed in victory on the battlefield, statesmen capable of national self-control and with an international sense of duty had found the strength to negotiate,[1] both opponents being ready to say 'No' to dishonourable conditions and rather than accept them to strike again, both armies unconquered, both home fronts erect, but both sobered, then a spirit of mutual respect would have had free course. The healing powers of humanity, repressed for four years, would on the very first day have been released as speedily and as naturally as doctors and Red Cross men were sent to work after a battle.[2]

[1] I give in Appendix IV. the opinions of three British politicians which were sent to me at my request in 1921. They come from men who took a prominent part during the war in advocating a peace of understanding and deal with the question whether the British peace movement ever had a prospect of success.

[2] From my lecture 'Voelkerbund and Rechtsfriede,' delivered on 3rd February, 1919. Printed in *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, March 1919.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL EFFORTS DURING THE VICTORIOUS OFFENSIVE

(March to July 1918)

The feeling of irresistibility which accompanied our troops at the beginning of the battle cannot be described. The front frozen for years was thawing. Confidence in leadership and victory had never been greater, not even in August 1914.

In the military section of the Foreign Office there worked a young officer, a well-known writer, with a talent for description, who was always sent to the ' big shows ' to write an account of them. Before the offensive he had been an enthusiastic supporter of the peace of understanding. He now came back from the battle in the west and rushed into Haeften's office with the words : ' Never worry ! What an experience ! . . . World dominion ! '

The exultation leaped over to the population at home. An associate wrote : ' It would seem that we needn't say " No " to Briey and Longwy.' The peace resolution could not be referred to in the presence of the Reichstag Majority—they took it ill. In the Inter-Party Committee Fischbeck shouted triumphantly to Haussmann : ' The gas shells are doing it, aren't they ? ' At the Press conference an editor asked Lieutenant-Colonel von Haeften whether wireless stations had been provided for the various stages of the German advance to enable the correspondents to send out news of the victories. The public announcements of these days cannot be read without fear of the envy of the gods. But at the time they reflected the temper of the army and of the people at home.

On 25th March, 1918, General Field-Marshal von Hindenburg was awarded the Iron Cross with Golden Rays, a

distinction which had only been given once before—to Bluecher for his victory at Waterloo. The battle itself received the name of the ' Kaiser battle '—against the wish of the Kaiser.

On 1st April the Reichstag was given a mild rebuff by the General Field-Marshal, an experience which it did not seem to mind :

> ' The Briton and the Frenchman must not think that the new blood offerings which they have forced us to make, can be made for nothing. I share the army's confidence that the Reichstag appreciates this desire of the brave men at the front, the best sons of the people, and will also, for its part, stand up for the strong German peace which alone can spare us war in the future.'

At the end of March I received the following report on the situation :

> ' Lieutenant Colonel von Haeften left on Sunday evening, as the result of an unexpected summons, to see General Ludendorff, who is conducting the operations in a quiet place close to the front. . . .
>
> I should like in conclusion to refer once more to the necessity for intervention. At present a wave of jingoism is going through the country. Close friends of mine are being swept away by it. This is of course partly the just pride of a people standing once more on its feet, a people which felt as humiliated by the insolence of the enemy as it did by the cries of distress which Erzberger sent to the enemy countries. Kuehlmann as exponent of the programme of renunciation will certainly be replaced sooner or later. . . . (His opponents) are operating with war indemnity, the knocking out of England, etc. Here are two observations from the other side :
>
> (*a*) Haeften : " I have just said to a friend that in spite of a military operation which has been brilliant beyond all expectation, I feel pessimistic, because only a great political offensive on ethical lines, launched before the conclusion of the operation, will enable us to gather the fruit of our successes ; and the men for such an offensive are not there.
>
> (*b*) Professor Alfred Weber : " If the solution of the Kuehlmann crisis is left to public opinion, to the pressure of opposing currents, the automatic result will be Helfferich, followed by the military dictatorship. The only salvation I can see lies . . .

in an extension of the power of the Kaiser. If only he had the strength to act independently of public opinion."

It is not right to blame public opinion. Till now it has heard of only two programmes, one of renunciation and one of force. Its choice is therefore an easy one at times when our weapons are so fortunate. The third alternative, imperialism based on a moral foundation, is to-day a secret religion. To have it proclaimed in the right quarter at the height of our military success to an astonished German people and to a still more surprised world—such is the great opportunity offered to the Kaiser to recover his lost power. We dare not hold it up until our military successes have come to an end. Then it will be regarded as a sign of weakness. . . . We must use this programme to give our victories greater impetus even in the military sense. I will make my meaning clearer.

What keeps our enemies erect in their terrible hour of need ? What enables their Governments again and again to stir the war will of their peoples into new life ? It is the feeling that they are fighting for a holy and we for an unholy cause. . . .

I still believe to-day that the ethical programme, had it been proclaimed before the offensive, could have brought us peace. . . But now it is victory that it must bring us. And, therefore, it must be proclaimed *before* we have reached the summit of our military successes.

It would be best to choose a moment of relative quiet, a moment when sensational battle operations are not absorbing the attention of the world.

. . . May God protect the leaders of Germany from Pride.'

At the same time the first public warning was launched : [1]

' In the last few weeks we have been in an atmosphere of negotiations. The month before the beginning of a big battle is always politically fruitful. The negotiations in Bukarest yielded in importance to the great public conversation which was held between Hertling and Wilson and should have been held between Hertling, Balfour and Lansdowne. Even if the treaty of Bukarest proves to be a diplomatic masterpiece, no amount of confidence in his own diplomatic skill should have kept the Foreign Secretary from Berlin during that month before the offensive. Did Herr von Kuehlmann know of Hertling's last and second last speech ? Has Herr von Kuehl-

[1] *Deutsche Politik* of 29th March, 1918

mann been able to take a share at Bukarest in settling the momentous question whether it is Lloyd George's or Lansdowne's wish that is to be met? In other words; is the public conversation to be continued or not? Herr von Kuehlmann already bears the responsibility for the fact that Asquith's question of 26th July remained unanswered.[1] In the case of Asquith, who is nothing but a tactician, the scruples which led Germany to maintain an attitude of reserve are intelligible. But Lansdowne is a man of character. Behind him stands an honest popular movement, desirous of finding an honourable way out of the war.

Herr von Kuehlmann is doubtless staying on in Bukarest because he believes that he can do more important work there than in Berlin. If he believes this, he seriously over-estimates the value of diplomatic craftsmanship and despises the statesmanship which attempts to influence public opinion even in enemy countries.

There are three methods of liquidating the world war.

First, the diplomatic method. . . . You declare your readiness to negotiate and then wait for an opportunity of meeting an enemy representative somewhere, preferably one whom you have known before, hoping to devise a solution of the world war in friendly conversation. This method is *vieux jeu*.

Secondly: the democratic method. . . . Representatives of international Social Democracy meet and attempt to build up a better world on the basis of principles in which they believe but which they have not yet tested. The negotiations are conducted in public.

Thirdly: the method of statesmanship. The ground is prepared for negotiations by a public conversation which goes some way to discover the basis for an understanding and makes that basis so evident to the different peoples that public opinion in the belligerent countries presses for an attempt to bridge over the outstanding differences by diplomacy. When Herr von Kuehlmann made his first speech and spoke of the atmosphere necessary for the conduct of peace negotiations, it had been hoped that he would take the third way.

Critical as is our attitude in detail to the forms of expression selected by our well-meaning Government, there can be no doubt on the all-important point that the moral responsibility for the coming decision is borne by the enemy. The offensive was resolved on not in Berlin but in Versailles.'

[1] See above, p. 143.

Now what effect had the offensive on England ?

On 23rd March there is still a show of optimism. The cue given to the British Press is that the line may bend but will not break. A short duration of the offensive is predicted.

' It is the Germans' last card ; if it fails, they have lost the war.'

In the course of the same day feeling swings round. Haig's telegram : ' The Germans have broken through our system of defences west of St. Quentin,' makes a terrible impression. There is talk of the separation of the two armies and the loss of the Channel ports is reckoned with.

Haig himself asks for a generalissimo. The British strike is called off. Ramsay MacDonald joins the ' lords of the battle-cry.'

' The great German offensive,' he says, ' will not succeed. It may last for weeks, until their man power is exhausted, but Britain will not be beaten.'

With Haig's telegram began a period of that heroic truthfulness of which England in misfortune has often proved herself capable, to the detriment of her enemies.

From 27th March onwards one is conscious of a long-drawn-out sigh, passing into a great feeling of relief after the attack on Arras was beaten off on 29th March. But the prevailing tone is still one of dour determination to look the facts in the face.

Military criticism lost its voice during the opening days. It finds it again during the respite, but clearly works with patriotic restraint, although in reality the differences are as acute as before.

The military party insists on the full exoneration of Haig. He had not, they say, the necessary men at his disposal, because Lloyd George refused to take Robertson's advice and neglected the question of reserves. And what is more, he had been forced, under pressure from the French, ' who can always be sure of Lloyd George's support,' to extend the British front against his own better judgment and had thus imperilled it. The leadership had been masterly. Immediate satisfaction of the following demands is called for :

Conscription in Ireland. Raising of the age limit to fifty-five. A fresh combing out of protected industries. Limitation of the Eastern expeditionary forces to the measure necessary for holding the local positions. The reinstatement of Robertson, 'whose warnings had not been listened to.' Guarantees for the protection of the commanders in the field against the interference of civilians.

The 'Eastern' school replies:

We had reserves, but they were not in position. The relative numbers on the German and Allied fronts were roughly the same. 'We need a directing intelligence at times of crisis . . . especially at the point of junction.'[1] Haig had failed not only as a strategist but also as an organizer. The British front had obviously been in a state of transition from an offensive to a defensive line.

Lloyd George acts quickly. He takes advantage of the dismay prevailing in the country and the Alliance to force decisions which he could not have secured in better days. Foch becomes generalissimo.

The United States consent to American regiments being incorporated in French and British formations; they even sacrifice their prestige so far as to agree to sending untrained troops to complete their training in France and England.

These two measures were to prove decisive for the issue of the war.

The Officer in Command of the Fifth Army, Gough, was replaced by General Rawlinson.

To appease the General Staff party Lloyd George raises the age limit to fifty-five, promises a fresh combing out of industry and extends conscription to Ireland. It is quite clear that his conviction does not support these expedients any more than the announcement that certain 'Eastern' plans which had been decided on before the offensive, have been abandoned.

During the offensive in April and especially after the standstill in May, catastrophe at the front is no longer feared.

[1] Co-ordination between the British and French army commands left much to be desired.

But everywhere there is a deep earnestness, an almost superstitious dread of relapsing into the old light-hearted optimism. Foch is clearly becoming the man whom the public trust. Significant hints are dropped that Foch, in contrast to Pétain, is a believer in the offensive on principle. Even Repington brings himself to say that Foch guarantees Ypres.

In the course of April and May the peace party moves into position. The question which crops up is not why the battle was lost, but whose fault it is that the battle had to be fought. And the answer—confined, it is true, to the pacifist group in the city—is: 'The War Council of Versailles. The German Government wanted peace, and our leading diplomat [1] understood its language.'

The moderate Liberals make no charges regarding the past; for the future they demand that 'we must not miss the next chance; it will certainly come when the German offensive has failed; then we must take time by the forelock.'

The few voices in Germany which counsel moderation are carefully noted down.

The Independent Labour Party offers to follow Lansdowne on the way to peace.[2] Whenever his name is mentioned at meetings of workmen there is loud applause.

This trust of the masses was a unique trump which the Conservative statesman could play if ever it were a question of conjuring away the industrial peril by a peace of understanding.

During the great pause in the offensive in May the old Liberal leaders also ventured into the open. In the debate on the Emperor Karl's [3] letter Asquith's change of front was much commented on.

But the Opposition produces no compelling personality.

[1] Lansdowne.

[2] 'I personally would not hesitate,' says Snowden at the Independent Labour Party Conference on 2nd April, 1918, 'to support any peace Government even if it had at its head a statesman with an aristocratic and Tory tradition. The supreme necessity of an immediate honourable peace transcends all personal and party considerations; for this war must stop.'

[3] Of 31st March, 1917, to Prince Sixtus of Parma, brother-in-law of the Kaiser. Cf. Helfferich, *op. cit.* p. 65 ff.

General Smuts then takes the stage[1] and declares in plain language for a peace of understanding:

> 'It appears to me that if this war is to come to an end, it will be necessary for the combatants to try from time to time to get into touch with each other unofficially.'

The British war aims he said, were moderate and limited:

> 'We desire indemnities from no one. We desire no territories, no annexations.'[2]

Lloyd George himself still believes in the Knock-out blow and takes his counter-measures.

The great springs from which the British war effort derives its strength are once more replenished.

First the consciousness of having gone into the war with clean hands.[3] This consciousness had recently been badly riddled. An impression had been made by Morel's book *Truth about the War*, and above all by the Suchomlinof trial.

The British Press had thus been fairly silent for some months on the question of war guilt when the 'revelations' of Muehlon and Lichnowsky appeared. Three million copies were broadcasted under the title *Guilty!* but that gives only a faint image of the use made of these memoranda for the strengthening of the British war morale.[4]

The *Westminster Gazette* of 3rd April writes:

> 'In all the sufferings and horrors of these times there has come over the country an overwhelming sense of the inevitability and rightness of our cause in the war . . . There may

[1] Speech in Glasgow (*Manchester Guardian*, 18th May, 1918).

[2] Speech in Fairfield Yard, Govan.

[3] The British soldiers, too, were continually having it impressed on them that Britain was fighting the world's battles. Significant is Haig's army order, published in the *Manchester Guardian* on 13th April, 1918:

'Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.'

[4] Prince Lichnowsky's confidential notes became known to the public against his will. They were shown only to a circle of initiated acquaintances, but the promise of discretion was violated by an unpardonable breach of confidence.

be a few . . . who, when the Hindenburg hammer-stroke fell, repented of August 1914 . . . Ever since Brest Litovsk there has been a massive simplicity about the issue which has sunk deeper and deeper into the mind of the country, and has finally been clinched in these very days by the astonishing revelations of Lichnowsky and Mühlon . . . Now we have the testimony of Germans, whose authority and sources of knowledge cannot be gainsaid, that their Kaiser actually did this thing, and something stirs in the depths of us when we hear that same man shouting to his God and claiming him as aider and abettor in the crime.'

The second source from which British war idealism derives its strength is the conviction that Germany's war aims threaten the safety and honour of England.

The chief material used by the British Government is derived from our public announcements. ' All the German newspapers are really now Pan-German,' says the *Manchester Guardian*. Telegrams of the Supreme Command are printed as well as utterances of the Kaiser.

A third source of strength is the feeling that ' time works for us and against Germany.'

Every expression referring to a ' decisive ' battle is carefully extracted from the German Press. Much is made in this sense of the name ' Kaiser battle.' The *Daily News* stresses the fact that in the announcements of the Kaiser and of the Supreme Command the word ' rapid ' is always to the fore. This word, it is pointed out, betrays the German people's longing for peace in all its impatience. Germany's sole salvation is a speedy peace.

This line of argument is accompanied by a long series of newspaper statements which throw light on the bad food situation in Germany.[1]

This evidence from England supplied food for serious thought. The British home front held, and it held because

[1] The *Bremer Weserzeitung* is against the cutting down of the meat ration. The *Lokalanzeiger* announces that the private sale of pigs is no longer to be allowed in the province of Brandenburg. The *Leipziger Volkszeitung* states that now even game, fish, etc., could only be had by card ; the *Berliner Tageblatt*, that fish had disappeared from the Gross-Berliner market during the war. The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* comments

we had struck only a military blow and not a political one as well.

Now imagine the following sequence of events :

1. End of February : Rejection of the idea of negotiation by Lloyd George with the intention of putting an end to war-disturbing speeches not only in Britain but also in Germany.
2. On 5th March : Lansdowne's public communication to Count Hertling, the intention of which was that Germany should not allow herself to be duped by Lloyd George and should not build her entire policy on the present British Government. A question to Hertling : What does he mean by his declaration on Belgium ?
3. Let us next assume that, say on 12th March, Hertling gives an unambiguous answer to Lansdowne's question.
4. Next assume, say, on 15th March, a declaration by Lansdowne supported by Grey in the House of Lords : ' We have now got a declaration by the German Government which opens the way to negotiations.'
5. Immediately afterwards : A declaration by Lloyd George that the German concession should be registered as a sign of weakness. Their insolence has not yet been sufficiently crushed ; they will become still more pliable if Britain only now remains firm.
6. On 22nd March : The British lines penetrated, the British army in flight, in the course of the next few days more than a hundred thousand prisoners.

Now picture to yourself what the British home front would have looked like in such a case.

Now once more there was an opportunity—would it be missed again ?

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on the lack of eggs and poultry. The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* and *Frankfurter Zeitung* mention grievances in connection with the food supply, and the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* is quoted for the totally inadequate milk supply, particularly to children. The poor supply of vegetables and the lack of sugar are mentioned. All this is rounded off with statistical reports on the increase of mortality among German babies and underfeeding of boys and girls.

What a contrast between England in misfortune and Germany—no, fortunate we could not be called. Over there the full seriousness of the situation is acknowledged. Public criticism has raised its voice, but it is a patriotic criticism ; it helps to shape the most serious decisions of war policy. With us, everybody—authorities, Reichstag, Press and people, waits for the commanders in the field to bring us victory and peace, no longer with the exultant enthusiasm which accompanied the first rush, but still in confidence that Hindenburg and Ludendorff will somehow ' bring it off.' No political authority awakens to a feeling of responsibility and cries out : ' Heavens, man, things are not going well enough, we must help the soldiers ! ' I had known since the end of March that the army did not count on being able to bring the enemy to their knees by its own unaided strength.

It was hard to know the truth and not be able to speak it out. What, after all, was the use of all our memoranda and our secret persuasion ? Even now many such documents were being written. Among them I find a proposal for countering the enemy propaganda :

' Against the enemy propaganda of hate :

Establishment of a Ministry of Prisoners with a speaker of international reputation at its head, whose duty should be to attack and to defend.

Against the propaganda of encouragement :

In our public announcements words like " decision," " rapid and victorious peace " must be avoided because they betray internal weakness.

Against the enemy propaganda on the question of guilt :

Count Metternich should be urged to write a pamphlet in answer to Prince Lichnowsky.

Against the British misrepresentation of our defensive offensive as a knock-out offensive :

Before the offensive ends a German programme of war aims must be published which is reconcilable with the honour and security of the British people. It is essential that this programme should not be held up till after the offensive. After our operations in France have been finally closed, an all-round feeling of exhaustion will necessarily set in. The enemy is already busy branding the coming German exhaustion as

final, while the British is only temporary. It would therefore be taken as a sign of weakness if after the offensive we drop the Pan-German tone with a jerk, and turn once more to pious sermonizing on justice, humanity and the vital interests of foreign peoples. That would betray the same lack of political tact which made us mock and provoke the enemy during our victories and draft peace resolutions in a period of depression.

It was no good—the precious lull passed. There was still readiness in Britain to see an honourable way out in the Belgian declaration. How long would it last? The Americans were streaming to France. There were far more of them than the Allies themselves had expected and our deprivations at home were growing daily and could no longer be veiled.

It was then that I was startled by the following message from Switzerland. Stegemann, it appeared, had spoken his mind to a member of the 'Military Section' at the beginning of May 1918.

There were two things, he said, which looked bad for Germany:

1. Kemmel was captured too late.
2. 'Your Supreme Command is not telling the truth. Foch has something up his sleeve, he is not merely darning. I know Foch's military genius too well for that from his writings.'

The report sent me on 11th May then continued:

'Stegemann summed up as follows: "Germany's military situation is brilliant—and hopeless. Reason: Germany's victories can only be turned to account by an attack on the enemy peoples along the lines of political psychology. A moment for such an attack, such as will never recur, has been missed. I, Stegemann, have excellent reason to know that the threat of her offensive put Germany in a more powerful position politically than Germany had any notion of. The nervousness of the Entente was increasing from day to day. Their position was not growing any better even if there had been a few months delay. . . . their own initiative was completely paralyzed. A German declaration on Belgium at this juncture would either have made the offensive superfluous or

increased its effect a hundredfold. I intended to write an open letter to Count Hertling—and then gave up the idea because I did not know the attitude of the Supreme Command.'

Stegemann went on to explain how Germany could never emerge victorious from this war unless her leading men realized that the control of popular psychology is part of the art of war.'

The suggestion that Stegemann should try to have a conversation with Ludendorff, was answered by him as follows :

' I should very much like to speak first to another man—Prince Max of Baden. He is a Prince and a Liberal—and when you have said that you have said everything. His speeches and his philanthropic record put him in an unassailable position for the task of reconciling the world to Germany.'

The report concluded :

' Only the pressure of public opinion has any effect on the Government. . . .

Only the princes can now bring salvation. Stegemann said to me that he knows that the Crown Prince of Bavaria is of the right way of thinking. Your Highness said the same thing. Would not a combined warning lead to a change of heart before it is too late ? I do not see how we can be in time if we take shelter and wait till the storm is over. When the storm is over Germany's strength will be spent. . . . For unless the wrong people in the enemy countries are afraid of us, the right-thinking people over there will never win through.'

I could only endorse the impatience which spoke through these words. Germany's moderation would only be effective so long as we were winning. But we would not be ready for moderation until we had ceased to win and then it was too late. I felt it my duty to make every effort in my power to break through this vicious circle. But after the vain endeavours of the last twelve months I had clearly realized that I must lay aside my reserve. So long as I was merely pressing advice unasked I could effect but little. To bring about decisions that mattered, I must hold an official position which justified me in the eyes of the Kaiser and the Chancellor in stating my opinion and even

obliged me to do so. I thought at the time of a post as Minister of Propaganda and also informed my associates, who kept urging me, that in case of need I would consent to become Foreign Secretary.

In the middle of May I went to the front to visit the Baden troops.

On 19th May—the Saturday before Whitsuntide—I was invited by the Field-Marshal to come from Maubeuge to Avesnes to dinner. I sat between the Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff. We discussed military and political questions, and towards the end of the meal I turned to the General and told him that there was something I specially wanted to say before we parted.

I pointed out that the political offensive which I had recommended in February [1] had not been undertaken, while the military offensive, in spite of our army's heroic struggle, had not brought victory. I did not know what our military situation and our strength was at the moment and could therefore not judge whether further offensives on the grand scale were projected or were possible. However that might be, I begged him to promise me one thing, and that was that he would enlighten the Government before our last offensive strength has been thrown in, for then it would be high time to make peace. Everything depended on whether we went to the conference table with an army still capable of striking, so that a further appeal to arms could be made if impossible conditions were put forward. 'Before you take your last horse out of the stable, make an end.'

The General agreed with me. I could not say more at the time. No one could fail to see how preoccupied he was with the coming military operations.

The new offensive developed into an attack of unprecedented weight. It was directed against the French front between the Aisne and the Marne. The initial successes outstripped the boldest anticipations, and carried the battle further than the original plan of the Supreme Command had contemplated. Paris was on the verge of panic; but old

[1] See above, p. 257 ff.

Clemenceau succeeded in allaying it : ' I will fight in front of Paris, I will fight in Paris and I will fight behind Paris.' [1] On 3rd June the German attack comes to a standstill. Ludendorff attempts to push the offensive forward, but the French counter-attacks, now reinforced by Americans, compel him on the 11th to break off the battle without having forced the decision. He leaves, however, a huge projecting wedge standing on the Marne with the intention, obvious to friend and foe alike, of again taking up the offensive at a given moment.

While the battle was still in triumphant progress and spirits rose high in Avesnes, over the astounding successes on the Chemin des Dames, Haeften did what no other man would have dared to do. He arrived at Headquarters with a carefully drafted warning [2] of the utmost gravity. It culminated in the words :

> ' We cannot afford any longer to drift before events and to wait until one fine day the political fruits of our victories fall into our lap. Unless our statesmanship sets to work on a definite plan before the conclusion of the military operations, there is no prospect of a peace of statesmanship ; and only a peace of statesmanship corresponds with our interests.'

Haeften expected that he and his memorandum would be shown the door. But General Ludendorff became thoughtful and agreed that he would have to insist on the Government undertaking a political offensive, because our victories alone could not bring peace. ' It is high time,' he said to Haeften, ' that something were done. The memorandum must go to the Chancellor [3] this very evening with a covering letter.' [4] On 17th June Haeften explained his plan to Count

[1] Cf. Herman Stegemann, *Geschichte des Krieges* ; Stuttgart and Berlin, 1921, IV., p. 566.

[2] Printed in Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 478 ff. Compare also Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen* 1914 *bis* 1918, Berlin, 1919, p. 476.

[3] The memorandum was forwarded on 8th June to the Chancellor ' with an urgent recommendation ' (Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 473, note) and laid before him on 14th June. Cf. *Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Berlin, 1926, Vol. VIII., p. 273 f.

[4] Of 8th June, 1918, printed in *Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Vol. I., Berlin, 1925, p. 131 ff.

Hertling in the presence of von Kuehlmann and suggested that General Ludendorff would now agree even to the declaration on Belgium. Kuehlmann commissioned Haeften to prepare and carry out the proposed political offensive, but he himself did not draw the obvious conclusions from Haeften's statement. The Secretary of State at that time believed in the near prospect of confidential conversations, and on 24th June he delivered the speech in which he used the information conveyed to him in confidence by the Supreme Command, to the effect that they no longer believed in a victory by force of arms alone, as follows :

> ' Without some such exchange of views, given the enormous extent of this war of coalitions and the number of powers involved in it, an absolute end is hardly to be expected from military decisions alone, without recourse to diplomatic discussions.'

This incident was another telling proof of our lack of political discipline. Herr v. Kuehlmann's remark was not specially stressed (any danger it had lay rather in the fact that it suddenly and unexpectedly sounded a totally different note from the official announcements issued since the beginning of the offensive). The hope remained that these words would fade away before the enemy noticed their deeper meaning, when the German Opposition made Kuehlmann's unhappy remark a burning point of controversy.

Crown Prince Rupprecht wrote me on the subject on 5th July, 1918 :

> ' The proceedings in the Reichstag, Kuehlmann's speech, and also the speeches of Stresemann and Posadowsky were far from pleasant.[1] Stresemann was the chief sinner for taking Kuehlmann's words to mean that in the latter's view nothing more could be done in a military sense, and Posadowsky made a blunder when he remarked that Kuehlmann had said things which could be said *sub rosa* but not publicly, and thereby as good as admitted the correctness of Kuehlmann's statements. More regrettable still are the nasty speeches recently made by Scheidemann and Ledebour, which undoubtedly make negotia-

[1] A leading critic of Kuehlmann was Count Westarp.

tions far more difficult. Kuehlmann, whom I really know only by sight and for whom I have no particular liking, can be shelved if need be, but I should not regard his immediate departure as opportune since it would be taken in neutral and enemy countries (where the reception of Kuehlmann's speech was in general less unfavourable than in Germany) to be a victory of the Pan-Germans and of a supposed War Party.

There has been no change in my view of the situation since our conversation. More and more Americans are coming, but for the present they will not give us much trouble. . . .

As things now are, I would urge you not to get disgusted at this or that unpleasantness, nor to let other difficulties divert you from your original course. I regard what you are doing as extraordinarily important and promising, and can think of no one else who is more thoroughly fitted than you are for the task before you. A man has sometimes to master his nerves—they are all the better for it—and with work and initial success comes increased self-confidence and pleasure in work. Difficulties are there to be overcome. The task that awaits you is a lofty one, and well worth while.

I hope soon to speak to the Chancellor. . . .'

General Ludendorff flew into a violent rage at Kuehlmann's speech and at once cancelled the projected political offensive by telephone. It was clear that Kuehlmann's retirement was only a question of days. Hans Delbrueck said in the *Deutsche Politik* of 12th May, 1918, that the appointment of his successor was a war operation of decisive importance. He was right.

A Pan-German Foreign Secretary would dynamite our home front and throw our masses open to the Independents. Abroad it would mean the bracing of the enemy war will, and would give the strongest support to Lloyd George and Clemenceau ; in short, it would mean the certain prolongation of the war under conditions made more difficult for Germany and easier for the enemy.

On 8th July v. Kuehlmann was dismissed. His successor was Herr v. Hintze. He was not the candidate of the Supreme Command.

Herr v. Hintze was certainly not a Pan-German as our Left Press and the enemy said, but he was certainly a repre-

sentative of the ' vieux jeu,' who did not take public opinion seriously enough. To end the war he saw only one way, that of feelers. And so he, too, was condemned throughout his period of office to grope in the dark without finding contact.

When Hertling was appointed I could still feel relieved that the cup had passed me. But to-day I saw myself that nothing could save us unless a representative of our programme held a position of influence and authority, and I had confidence in my ability to win the Chancellor, General Ludendorff, and above all, the Kaiser, to a policy which would resist popular excitement and aim at an understanding before we were exhausted. I was convinced that the Kaiser sympathized in principle with the psychological method, and I had confirmation of this in the middle of July.

On 28th June I had laid before him proposals for combating the enemy's atrocity propaganda and had suggested the following arrangements among others :

1. The Prisoner of War Section in the War Office should have at its disposal a speaker of international reputation, who, like Lord Newton,[1] must be able at any time to make an opportunity either in Parliament or on some other public occasion, or in an interview, to speak in such a way that enemy countries must listen.
2. Documentary confirmation and detailed exposition should accompany the accusations made by the War Office speaker. This should be done by a Report on Atrocities, no longer issued, as heretofore, by our official authorities, but endorsed by the responsible signatures of well-known German jurists and philanthropists.
3. A Prisoner of War Commission, consisting of men of international standing (theologians, scholars, etc.) ought to be set up. Its members would have the right either personally or through representatives of their own choice to visit all German prison camps both without notice and also at stated intervals. The German

[1] Head of the British Ministry of Prisoners of War.

authorities should put them in a position to supply information applied for from England and guarantee its truth. . . .

4. Some one in a high position should make a public announcement, referring, say, to a statement of the Kaiser's, which removes all doubt that the Kaiser favours the humane treatment of prisoners. A suitable form for such an announcement would be :

'The man who inflicts hardships not required by military needs on enemy prisoners, is a conscious enemy agent,' or

'The Red Cross spirit belongs as much to the German army as the spirit of attack. The man who does not spare a defenceless enemy, is as great a traitor as the man who does not put forth every effort for the destruction of a fighting enemy.'

I sent the following letter with my memorial :

'BADEN-BADEN,
28th June, 1918.

MY MOST GRACIOUS COUSIN !

My absorption since 1914 in the work of the Care of Prisoners and all questions connected therewith has brought me into contact with friend, foe and neutral, and enabled me to see deeply into this difficult, distressing, and highly interesting aspect of the war. Scarcely any other work offers such an opportunity to study national psychology and gain an insight into the inner life of the individual as well as into that complex of influences which lie behind the life and the suffering of these hundreds of thousands of unhappy men, influences which affect them and are reflected back from them to the countries to which they belong. I have spoken to many hundreds of German soldiers returned from captivity and to hundreds of enemy prisoners in Germany. I have assisted the organizations which support them, and have carried on an extensive correspondence on the question of their exchange and their fortunes in general.

In the course of this work I have come to realize clearly that we are here dealing with a question not only of humanity but of high policy. For behind every prisoner stands his family and his friends and this multitude of interested and sympathetic people, mounting up to millions, necessarily forms a power, in

other words a body of opinion. To influence and utilize this opinion in Germany's favour has been my endeavour ever since I grasped the range and effect of this work.

I have had numerous and exhaustive discussions on these questions with a valued fellow-countryman, Major-General Friedrich, the head of the Prisoner of War Department at the War Office, a man whose intelligence and genuine humanity I cannot sufficiently praise.

In spite of the many currents of opinion which, especially at the beginning of the war, regarded the ruthless treatment of prisoners as a patriotic act, the wise and humane tendency represented by Friedrich has carried the day. Above all we may be thankful that he, in his anxiety for Germany's good name, the high level of her culture and her lofty traditions, succeeded in laying down guiding lines which it honours us to follow. It is true that through no fault of his things have happened which ought not to have happened. The power of the individual superior officer and his influence on the fortunes of the prisoner are naturally very great. We know the extraordinary degree to which camp-commanders, their adjutants, or even individual interpreters can succeed and have succeeded in mitigating or aggravating the conditions in which the prisoners under their charge live. The burden of this work is enormous, and the personal excitement caused by bad news from enemy countries, which may represent relatives and friends as suffering severely under cruel treatment, can play a great part and have a regrettable effect.

But one thing remains true: The tendency represented by Headquarters is absolutely good and the organization admirable. The choice of camp commandants, too, is very happy almost without exception.

In spite of all this, ever since the war began, the enemy propaganda, and especially the British, basing its case on individual incidents, has known how to handle the prisoner question with great skill as an item on its list of "German atrocities." Our defence, passive and active, was not effective. We failed to meet the attacks with methods adapted to the mentality of the individual countries. Still, the "atrocities" after they had been taken up so zealously at the beginning of the war, and had roused a great deal of hatred, had made but little noise for some time.

Recently, however, the British Government has reverted to its old methods and is employing them successfully to keep the war spirit alive. We must counter it effectively. I have had

my views on the best methods of attack and defence committed to paper and beg you to have the kindness to listen to these proposals, which I have sent to Freiherr von Gruenau. I have also sent them to the Chancellor and Major General Friedrich.

Unless we adopt the right measures we shall drop behind the British, especially as they give their approval and their support to the private helpers who are loyally looking after the German prisoners and have thereby furnished themselves with a strong trump card in the eyes of world opinion.

Proposals for the setting up of something similar in Germany which I made two years ago were regarded as inopportune and turned down. But it seems to me supremely important that when we take our place—as one day we shall—at the conference table, we should hold not only all the material but all the moral trumps. For it is certain that our enemies will use these weapons as well as all the others against us and we ought to use every means of tearing the mask from their faces.

My modest proposals are intended to serve this end. . . .'

On 15th July I was informed by Gruenau :

'. . . Your Highness' comments and proposals on the prisoner question and on the use to be made of our treatment of prisoners for the purposes of propaganda have keenly interested the Kaiser, and I was thus able to have His Majesty's desire conveyed by way of the Military Cabinet to the War Office, and likewise to the Foreign Office. The Chancellor has also taken a great interest in the question and has acted accordingly. I hope it will meet with Your Highness' approval that the matter was referred to the War Office by His Majesty and that thus His Majesty's opinion became known from the very beginning.'

CHAPTER VII

THE MILITARY SET-BACK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Kaiser had left for the front to be present at the new battle operations which began shortly after midnight on 16th July, 1918.

Kuehlmann's speech had given such offence to the Supreme Command because they held that the troops who were entering the second battle of the Marne ought not to be robbed of their belief that they were fighting the decisive battle.

Our attack was held up on the evening of the 16th, nor did it get any further on the 17th. In the night between the 16th and 17th Ludendorff gave the order for the evacuation of the Marne bend. Right into this movement Foch thrust his counter-offensive, for which the enemy had been waiting impatiently for months, and in which we had not really believed. We found ourselves in a terribly serious situation, in which we maintained ourselves for two days and from which we then extricated ourselves by a masterly operation.

Our reports on this new battle were misleading. The terrible losses of the French and Americans were emphasized.

> 'During the night we withdrew our troops south of the Marne to the northern bank of the river, unobserved by the enemy.'[1]

Stress was laid on the fact that the enemy had not attained his final objective of pinching off the whole area between Aisne and Marne.

This was all perfectly true ; but the essential fact remained in the dark that the decisive battle, begun with great boldness

[1] Communiqué of 20th July, 1918.

and in high hope, was lost. I did not at the time understand the meaning of our defeat, but shared the belief that the Supreme Command would succeed once more in regaining the lost initiative. At the same time I was puzzled by a brief remark in a letter from Crown Prince Rupprecht dated 22nd July, 1918 :

> ' . . . You will have been informed of the latest happenings at the front. The reporting was very clumsy and calculated to give rise to disappointment later. Things are now much better, but believe me, the surprise was very unpleasant.'

I sent a new version of ' Ethical Imperialism ' to Crown Prince Rupprecht and General Ludendorff. I must admit to-day that the military foundation for our proud project was already in ruins.

Then came the 8th of August—Ludendorff's ' black day.' [1] The British inflicted a terrible defeat on us at Albert. After the second battle of the Marne our enemies had still restrained their rejoicings—Foch's name had been mentioned everywhere with fervent hope, but people had not yet dared to believe in a change of fortune. But now England was exultant :

> ' If a bolt from the blue could descend with pleasing effects or a bombshell drop to disseminate good news instead of scattering explosive—only such abrupt and happy phenomena could symbolize the astonishment and satisfaction of the country in the news of the last three days.' (*Observer*, 11th August.)

' We are smashing through,' said Lloyd George.

This time the German communiqué was more accurate. Haig's ' surprise success ' was admitted :

> ' Favoured by thick mist the enemy broke into our infantry and artillery lines with his tanks. North of the Somme we threw the enemy back from our positions in a counter-attack . . . we have suffered losses in prisoners and guns.' (Communiqué of 9th August, 1918.)

[1] See below, Vol. II., p. 111, and Ludendorff, *Kriegserinnerungen*, p. 547.

From Berlin I heard : ' The dejection is terrible.' At the same time came a piece of news which made it clearer to me than anything else into what deep water the Government had got. Herr von Radowitz, Chief of the Chancellery, had turned to Colonel v. Haeften and urged him to take over full charge of propaganda as Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office.

Surely if the Government were appealing to the psychological method of the Military Section they must be at the end of their wits. It was a pity that the light dawned too late, for the political offensive recommended by us had been intended as the preparation and accompaniment of victory, but not as its substitute.

Colonel v. Haeften set out for Headquarters on 11th August [1] in order, if possible, to evade the appointment. The Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary were at Spa, as the Kaiser desired to hold a Crown Council.[2] Haeften found General Ludendorff outwardly calm but very grave. It was not the loss of territory or the superiority of the tank—a weapon which we had neglected—which disturbed him ; he was the man to rise to the surmounting of unexpected difficulties. What depressed the General was that he had lost confidence in the morale of his troops, the indispensable element in victory. Ludendorff said to Haeften that the men could no longer be depended on and we needed peace quickly. For a defensive the army would have to be much more efficient than for an offensive. Next morning he urged Haeften to take over the charge of German propaganda which he had been offered. No hope could any longer be placed in an offensive. The Command had had the ground cut away under their feet. It was now of supreme importance that

[1] On his conversations with Ludendorff cf. ' Auszuege aus einem Ende 1918 der Obersten Heeresleitung erstatteten dienstlichen Bericht des Obersten von Haeften uber seine Taetigkeit 1918 ' (' Extracts from a service report presented to the Supreme Command at the end of 1918 by Colonel v. Haeften on his activity during 1918 '). *Untersuchungsausschuss*, II., p. 369 ff.

[2] Cf. Karl Count von Hertling, *Ein Jahr in der Reichskanzlei*. Freiburg, i/B., 1919, p. 148 ff.

the psychological attack should be made on the British home front. Haeften admitted that in such a situation something must be done at once to secure peace ; but he implored the General not to take any steps at present on the initiative of the Supreme Command ; it was the Government that must act now. He asked whether the front would hold until the offensive was spent in the late autumn. Ludendorff replied that he still had some confidence that we could hold out. Haeften summed up as follows : So we may take it that there is still time for the Government to take all necessary measures; the Supreme Command must now enlighten the Government and then fight on.

Haeften then asked for exact details of the situation, pointing out that the Government needed freedom of movement. A plain public declaration on Belgium was necessary, promising restoration of her sovereignty and integrity. Ludendorff agreed.

During the conversation Hindenburg came into the room, a few minutes before the discussion with Hertling and Hintze. Colonel von Haeften heard the General Field-Marshal turn to Ludendorff with the question : ' What shall I tell them ? ' and the reply was : ' The whole truth ! ' [1] And then the General once more sketched the military situation to the Field-Marshal in all its seriousness.

There is no minute of this conversation between the Government and the Army Command on the 13th August but I am convinced that the Field-Marshal neither palliated nor suppressed anything.[2] For me it is conclusive that on the strength of this preliminary conversation v. Hintze, in the Crown Council, summed up the military information which he had received as follows :

> ' From the definition of the military situation supplied by the chief of the General Staff of the Army in the Field, it follows that we can no longer hope to break the war will of our enemies by operations of war, and that the object of our strategy must

[1] Haeften's ' Report,' quoted above, p. 371.

[2] Cf. Hertling, *op. cit.* p. 148, on the contents of the discussion, and Haeften's ' Report,' quoted above, p. 372.

be to paralyze the enemy's war will gradually by a strategic defensive.' [1]

This Crown Council of 14th August,[2] held immediately after the turning point of the war, is already the subject of keen historical controversy. Statement confronts statement.[3] Besides the Kaiser there were present: the Crown Prince, the two Commanders in the Field, Count Hertling, von Hintze, and in addition from the Kaiser's suite: General Adjutant v. Plessen, v. Berg, Chief of the Civil Cabinet, and Freiherr v. Marschall, Chief of the Military Cabinet. The great point in dispute is: Was the Kaiser presented with the 'true and correct balance sheet of the world war,' which he had demanded?

Now, if the question is put in this form: Did General Ludendorff appear before his Emperor in the Crown Council and use such language to him as he had used to the Field-Marshal, the answer must clearly be: No, the Supreme Army Command did not speak without mercy or reserve. But if the form of the question is: Did the Government, at the Crown Council, obtain an insight into the terrible situation sufficiently clear to call for immediate action—both at home and abroad—then the answer to the question must certainly be in the affirmative. Not a syllable was said in contradiction of Hintze's summary of the military information which he had received. The significance of the military balance sheet was quite unaffected by Hindenburg's concluding remark that he hoped it would prove possible to remain standing on French soil, and thus in the end force our will on the enemy. This final sentence was clearly not part of the military verdict; it was rather a word of comfort, such as the Field-Marshal may well have used to spare his King's feelings.

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden zur Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstandes*, 1918, Berlin 1924, p. 4.

[2] Minute printed: *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 1.

[3] Cf. Ludendorff, *Das Scheitern der neutralen Friedensvermittlung, August-September*, 1918, Berlin, 1919, p. 10 ff. Paul v. Hintze, 'Das Waffenstillstandsangebot,' in *Vossische Zeitung* of 11th, 12th and 13th September, 1919, and his note, *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 2.

It is incomprehensible that the Government did not act. Herr v. Hintze gives two reasons :

1. The military report had not been exhaustive. I dispute this.

2. He had been authorized to take diplomatic measures in the direction of peace, but subject to the limitation that he should await a juncture more favourable in a military sense, say a success on the Western front.

I feel it my duty to deal with this line of argument, because the standpoint which Colonel v. Haeften successfully advocated at Headquarters on 14th August was also my standpoint, namely, that a military setback must not be the occasion of overtures to the enemy. But in recommending this we were far from recommending political inactivity. On the contrary, as the Supreme Command quite rightly said, if the peace move was to be deferred to a more favourable military moment, action was necessary now to break up the enemy's war will and strengthen our home front—different action, it is true, from that contemplated by the Government. They spoke at the Crown Council of propaganda and did not see that even the ideal Minister of Propaganda must work in vain if the Government which he supported made no appeal.

What the balance sheet of the world war on 14th August, 1918, demanded was a change of programme, in other words, a change of Government. At this military crisis declared adherents of the peace of understanding should have been called to office, but not a word should they have uttered on the subject of understanding ; on the contrary, they should have proclaimed national defence.

The information I received at the time regarding the course of the discussions at Spa was scanty. All that I heard was that a propaganda campaign on the lines of the psychological method had been decided on and that Hintze would attempt at the same time to throw out diplomatic feelers. The military situation was said to be serious, but hope was not abandoned.

Still I was better off than the members of the Bundesrat, to whom the ' balance sheet of the world war ' was presented

by Herr v. Hintze on 27th August, 1918, in the following words :

> ' We have, it is true, suffered a few minor checks, but not such that we need describe our military situation as bad or desperate.' [1]

But the truth naturally trickled through ; confidence was failing and anxious questions were asked everywhere. At that time I received three important warnings.

Fendrich, the Social Democrat, wrote me a letter on 9th August,[2] full of anxiety for the home front. He laid stress on his party's determination to defend the national cause and could point not only to his own loyalty but also to the *Vorwaerts'* strong and proud words : ' Danger increases our strength tenfold.' But Fendrich added the warning that without confidence in our leadership, both at the front and at home, danger might lead to a tenfold diminution of our strength. And then he pointed to the attacks made on the Social Democrats in the appeal of the ' Union of Loyal Royalists,' which called for civil war and, among other things, cast up to the Majority Social Democrats that American millions were at work among them. Fendrich continued : Everything stands on the razor's edge ; every word is at present immeasurably important, and those who are so seriously concerned for the welfare of the monarchy and our country, should have a higher sense of responsibility for the national interests when they draft and broadcast their appeals.

Crown Prince Rupprecht sent me the following disquieting report :

> ' Munich,
> *15th August*, 1918.
>
> Dear Max,
>
> I have just arrived here . . . and hasten to send you hearty thanks for your letter of the 7th and for the February Memorandum.[3]

[1] Communicated by Boden, Delegate of Brunswick in the Bundesrat.

[2] Printed : Anton Fendrich, *Die Kluft*, Stuttgart, 1919, p. 82 ff.

[3] ' Ethical Imperialism,' see above, Part II., Ch. 5.

As for the memorandum, it is capital, but unfortunately the assumptions on which it was based are no longer all valid. By the mistaken operation beyond the Marne and the series of heavy reverses which followed, absolutely fatal both materially and morally, our military situation has deteriorated so rapidly that I no longer believe we can hold out over the winter ; it is even possible that a catastrophe will come earlier. Our official reporting is very bad ; its effect is that people both at home and in the army are losing confidence in the Supreme Command. And masses of propagandist sheets, in particular copies of Lichnowsky's revelations, have been thrown over to our troops by the enemy and are having a damaging effect on the morale of our exhausted soldiers. The Americans are multiplying in a way we never dreamt of. At the present time there are already thirty-one American divisions in France, while we are not only compelled to break up a whole series of divisions but have also to cut down many battalions by a company. The reserves are now insufficient by a long way to cover the losses and are besides, owing to lack of training personnel, underfeeding and physical defects, of less value than the reserves of which our enemies have still a huge number at hand. What we must therefore do, if we are to avoid a military catastrophe which will destroy our whole future as a nation, is to make haste and approach our enemies, and especially England, with peace offers, and peace offers which both can be accepted and in view of the temper of the English people must be accepted.

1. Complete restoration and indemnification of Belgium (every further month of war costs us as much).

2. Cession of parts of the French-speaking area in German Lorraine (for this the Chancellor as well as the Supreme Command appears to be ready, at least it was so at one time), in exchange for the return and rounding off of our African colonies.

. . . I think it an excellent idea of yours that you should come forward and make a speech. I can only repeat that from every point of view top speed is indicated—and all-important decisions must be taken and unfortunately sacrifices must also be made in order to ward off what is far worse.

More presently : at the moment I am badly in need of rest.'

The third cry of alarm came from Berlin :

'11*th August*, 1918.

A conversation which I had with an officer friend this afternoon leads me to send you a few more short details.

My friend's work takes him to all parts of the front. What he said was briefly this :

The depression at home is affecting the front. There is a general feeling that unless we manage in the next month or two to bring off a big political success and weaken the enemy's war will, Germany is lost.

There is much talk, and sympathetic talk, too, of the row which is due to break out in Parliament in the autumn. Expressions like " Scheidemann Ministry," etc., are being used. A flying officer said in so many words : " Well, Wilson won't make peace with the Hohenzollerns, and it will be two years yet before we are rid of them."

I have no wish to generalize from such remarks, or to doubt the morale of our army, but there are certain symptoms of disintegration which it would be a crime to ignore.

One has given so many warnings in this war that one shrinks from doing it again, but I feel it my duty to say once more that I am convinced we are heading for a catastrophe, unless a big new impulse is given to our people before the autumn and we can register unmistakable progress on the way to peace.

The present Government cannot give that impulse and cannot create the peace atmosphere. . . .

Hertling has definitely committed himself to the position that words are useless. If he or his colleagues suddenly begin to speak the world will say quite reasonably, " Now Hertling sees that the soldiers cannot bring it off. We have said all along that German failures would be the signal for a political offensive."

Even a dissolution of the Landtag would now look like yielding to force. People rightly assume that Hertling, who makes so much of his good relations with the Conservatives, would resort to such drastic measures only under the pressure of a disillusioned home population. And a sudden change of front in the treatment of the border states, such as the withdrawal of the military administration from the occupied territories, would look like yielding on the part of the Government, after Erzberger and others have again and again made the same demand in vain. The border states themselves would have the feeling that now the Germans were despairing of victory and growing humane.

I cannot get Stegemann's expression out of my head :

" If a man has said and done what is wrong ten times, he will not carry conviction if he speaks and acts rightly the

eleventh time. And no fine German words or measures will help unless they carry conviction."

Hertling's Government will certainly fall, as certainly as Bethmann had to fall, or Michaelis, or Kuehlmann.[1] True, the wrong successor has always been chosen so far. But why? Because people always waited until the Chancellor who had to be replaced was brought down by some accident or other, with the result that action had to be taken precipitately. The change should have been prepared for on a definite and statesmanlike plan, and carried out at the right moment, under no manifest pressure of events, by the free decision of the Crown.

The Reichstag Majority will give the Crown no scope in the autumn either. Do not make the mistake of underestimating their driving power. Their strength is growing with the popular depression, and the depression in autumn will be terrible. What is more, the dossier which Erzberger and Scheidemann are now assembling for their attack on this feeble Government and the Supreme Command for their policy of illusion will stagger the uninitiated. A Fehrenbach Ministry will be generally welcomed as a moderate solution. The only choice before the Kaiser will be machine-guns or parliamentary government, and there can be no doubt which he will choose. . .

Must things really be allowed to drift until the next accident comes? . . .'

These warnings came from men between whose spheres of activity there was all the difference of the world. But behind all three letters there was the same conviction that if things were allowed to drift, Germany was lost. Much could still be saved, but only by a decisive turn in our policy.

I thought it would be well to bring Fendrich's letter to the Kaiser's knowledge and accompanied it with the following personal note: [2]

'Salem,
15*th August*, 1918.

My Most Gracious Cousin,

I have taken the liberty to beg Freiherr v. Gruenau to lay Anton Fendrich's letter before you. The appeal of this sturdy Alemann found me in a mood not unlike his own. My

[1] Kuehlmann had been replaced by Admiral v. Hintze on 8th July.

[2] The letter is printed from the draft included in my records; whether it agrees word for word with the original I do not remember.

agreement with him prompted me to acquaint you with the distress of our people in better language and out of deeper knowledge than any I can lay claim to. You know the man ; his letter bears the stamp of loyalty, truthfulness and good sense.

The people is looking for its Kaiser and must find him if greater damage is to be averted. Whether rightly or wrongly, it is a fact that it is afraid of becoming estranged from him, while it is ready to follow his leadership if it is given the assurance that it is understood by him.

If the millions of brave German soldiers and industrious workmen in the war factories were driven to believe that their Kaiser seeks his loyal subjects in the swaggering ranks of the " Loyal Royalists " the result would be a disillusionment and an embitterment which would end by bringing the monarchical struggle into the streets and would block the springs from which the German has always drawn his loyalty to Kaiser and Empire and his self-sacrificing courage.

To unchain a civil war, as the " Empire Association for the Combating of Social Democracy " and the " Union of Loyal Royalists " are doing at a time when the supreme need is to rally all our forces, is a crime against the State and a piece of madness without parallel. It is a disaster that such unions cannot be put a stop to, but it would be a greater disaster if the least suspicion could exist that they had the approval of the Kaiser.

Fendrich is right when he says that the machinations of the Independent Socialists are a matter for the police, but the solution of the problem of Socialism in itself is a question of statesmanship and not of force.

I, too, can see no other means of averting the most serious damage to the authority of the Crown and the weakening of our home front than an " Appeal to the German People " in which the Royal Message of 1st August is strengthened and applied to the fifth winter of war which is before us.

The German people has been invited to believe that this autumn is to bring peace. The people has rejoiced in the belief that distress and suffering, mourning and anxiety will soon be things of the past. Its hopes have been disappointed. It will fight on and show its old loyalty and staunchness, if it knows that its Kaiser is and is determined to be the guardian of its inner unity and if it sees that the German Government is adopting methods calculated to beat down and sweep away the moral as well as the military obstacles that stand between us

and an honourable peace. For this purpose all the moral forces in Germany must be enlisted and everything likely to raise doubts of the moral foundation of our policy must be avoided. The Battle of Ideas is now raging, and in this battle we must be victors, if we are to emerge as victors from the war. The solution of the internal problems of Germany in a way which makes it clear that German freedom is better than Western democracy is a part of this battle.

It is mainly a matter of confidence between Government and people, and between people and Government. To awaken this confidence again and again and to anchor it ever more firmly is the fair task of the thrones and of the statesmanship of their counsellors.

This letter has not been lightly written, for I shrink more than I can say from giving the impression that I wish to interfere in matters which do not concern me. Only my unlimited confidence in your kindness towards me, and the solidarity which unites the German princes in common care for the common weal of the German people, and our common duty to watch that no harm is done to the monarchical idea in Germany—even by those who are well disposed to the monarchy—could bring me to take so serious a step. Your indulgence will judge it kindly.'

The Kaiser replied :

'I send you hearty thanks for forwarding your letter and Fendrich's and for your loyal care for Kaiser and Empire. I have had the letter sent to the Chancellor and have asked him to give his opinion on the matter and submit further proposals.'

The turn in our policy did not come yet.

Haeften devoted himself entirely to his propaganda duties.[1] His efforts were individually successful, but their total effect was bound to be a failure because his work was done on behalf of a Government whose days were numbered.

On 20th August, Solf, Secretary of State for the Colonies, delivered a great speech [2] in answer to Balfour.

On the 22nd I spoke in the Baden Chamber on the

[1] He had declined to hold the office as an Under-Secretary of State, but had been placed at Count Hertling's disposal in order to conduct our propaganda in unison with Deutelmoser, Director in the Ministry.

[2] At a reception of representatives of the Press in the Deutsche Gesellschaft.

League of Nations. The design of both speeches had been discussed with Haeften. Solf and I both professed our adherence to the peace of understanding and to the ideals of humanity, but we appealed as earnestly as we could to the people to fight to the death against the enemy rulers whose wish was to destroy us and who would have nothing to do with negotiations. Our speeches were intended to strike a conciliatory note to the opposition parties in the enemy countries, but to be a ' fanfare ' against Lloyd George and Clemenceau.

Solf made a declaration on Belgium. The words ' sovereignty ' and ' integrity ' had stood in his manuscript on the strength of the authorization given by General Ludendorff to Colonel v. Haeften on 13th August. But the Foreign Office was more Roman than the Pope and entered a protest at the last moment on the ground that the Supreme Command would not approve of these words, and so the passage was watered down and the following wording chosen :

> ' Last month the Chancellor declared in the Reichstag to all who had ears to hear that " we do not intend to retain Belgium in any shape or form." Belgium was to be set up again after the war as an independent state, under vassalage to none. Gentlemen ! *Nothing stands in the way of the restoration of Belgium but the war will of our enemies.*' [1]

The Secretary of State cleared up the question of the peace of Brest-Litovsk :

> ' . . . The peace of Brest-Litovsk was based on the one important point on which the Russian and German Governments were agreed ; namely that the alien peoples in Russia who had been oppressed for centuries should obtain the national independence for which they had striven. This agreement on the fate of the border peoples is a fact of world-wide importance which can never be effaced from history. The Russian and German points of view differed not in respect of the object but only in respect of the methods and the ways which were to lead to the independence of the peoples. Our point of view was and is that the road to freedom must not lead through anarchy and massacre. Between the first bursting of their

[1] My italics.

fetters and the full capacity of the border peoples for self-determination there naturally lies a stage of transition. Until the forces of order in the different countries find themselves, Germany feels herself called upon to protect these communities in their own as well as in the general interest, as Germany was in fact appealed to by the national majorities and minorities to do. The peace of Brest-Litovsk is a frame ; the picture which it will contain has only been sketched in rudimentary outline. The German Government, whose protection has been asked for and given, is determined not to abuse its position as protector to make a forcible annexation, but to set nations hitherto oppressed on the road to freedom and order and mutual tolerance.

Gentlemen ! Britain has forfeited all moral right to enter the lists for the Russian border states. In their unspeakable time of suffering during the war they appealed to Britain time and again to support their cause. This support was regularly refused them. There was a time when Britain fought Tsarist Russia more keenly than any other nation. But during the war when Tsarist Russia was oppressing, robbing and murdering within her own borders, Britain held her peace. Worse than that, she palliated and misrepresented the state of affairs in Russia before the world, so that Russia, thanks to Britain's moral support, could go on murdering with greater energy than ever, entirely unrestrained by the conscience of the world. Receivers of stolen goods cannot be allowed to sit on the bench. The problem of the alien peoples, indeed the whole Russian problem is looked at by Britain only from one point of view and that is how Britain's war effort is to be lightened. Britain has no fault to find with any constitution which keeps Russia fit as a war-machine, and if Ivan the Terrible were to come to life again and weld Russia together for a new struggle, the British would welcome him as an ally in the " crusade for freedom and right." But if Russia cannot make war any longer, then at least let there be civil war, so that there may be no peace on Germany's Eastern front. . . . The economic distress in the territories occupied by us is doubtless serious, but it is a piece of cynicism on British lips to offer sympathy here, for Britain's hunger blockade is directed against the occupied territories as much as against us, against the neutrals and against the whole world.

Balfour discusses our relations with each one of these border states. He gives the first place to his charge that the aim of the German intervention in Finland was to reduce Finland to

dependence on Germany, in other words, to create a German Portugal. What an outrageous insult to the Finnish struggle for independence which has inspired every friend of the small nations for decades! But Finland it appears, has forfeited all sympathy in Britain now that she feels herself threatened by the British proceedings in North Russia and refuses to be cut off from her communication with the ice-free Murman coast.

Speaking of our relations with the Baltic provinces, with Poland and with the Ukraine, Balfour brings forward a monstrous accusation. We would appear, to put it briefly, to have dealt with these countries as Britian has dealt with Greece;[1] we would appear, in fact, to have pressed them into active military service against Germany's enemies. Not a single soldier from these countries has been forced to fight for the cause of Germany.'

Solf repeated his profession of faith in Germany's colonial mission:

'. . . We want an all-round settlement among the colonial powers.

We desire that colonial questions should be regulated on the principle that the colonial possessions of the different European nations shall correspond to their economic strength and to such proof as history has given of their worthiness to protect the coloured peoples entrusted to their charge. Economic efficiency alone is not a sufficient legal title. A colony is a mission field. Those states which strove before the war to act up to the principle that humanity must be respected even in the coloured man—those nations have won the moral right to be colonial powers. Germany had won this right before the war. The gesture of liberation with which the annexation of the German colonies is fobbed off as an act of divine providence is a piece of blasphemy. For Balfour thinks it goes without saying that a moral justification must be found for the predatory instinct of the British imperialists.'

Then he concluded:

'. . . Gentlemen! The psychological situation behind the British statesman's speech is clear:

Our enemies do not desire a peace of negotiation.

Once more a wave of arrogance is passing through their peoples as happened after Italy and after Rumania entered the

[1] See above, p. 187, n. 2.

war and as happens after every passing political or military success. Once more the old war aims, laid down so clearly in the secret treaties which have never been denounced, are held in readiness. The war is once more being fought by the Entente for plunder and prestige.

The conclusion we must draw is obvious. We must read Balfour's speech as a call to the German people, in this fifth year of war, to rally all its strength once more to suffer, fight and win as it did in the great uprising of August 1914. . . .'

My speech was delivered in Karlsruhe on 22nd August, 1918. The occasion was the centenary of the constitution of Baden :

' Your Royal Highness has assembled the two Houses around you to celebrate the memorable events which took place a hundred years ago to-day, when the Grand Duke Karl gave Baden its constitution.

I know that the people of Baden unites with its Prince in thankful remembrance of this good day in its history.

. . . The Grand Duke Karl and his Government recognized that the only way to close the wounds of such a long and terrible war was to give the people's own power of recuperation free play in a strong and upright political life.

It is refreshing to-day to recall the replies to the Speech from the Throne which the First and Second Chambers addressed to the Grand Duke.

In the address of the First Chamber there is the following sentence :

" Our united efforts will therefore be bent to securing that the Constitution shall be the shield of personal freedom and of property and the strong bond which binds all classes indissolubly together in indivisible unity and brotherly union, in an equal spirit of reverence and emulation for the cause of Throne and country."

The address of the Second Chamber includes the following words :

" The unspeakable misery of this period gave birth to the great principle of the equality of the rights and duties of all citizens before the law."

In these two pronouncements two demands were made which will always remain the foundation of a strong national state—the demand on the state that it shall respect the dignity of man and the personal freedom of the individual, and the

demand on the individual that he shall devote himself to the common interest even to the sacrifice of his life.

The conflict between these two demands often appears to be irreconcilable. Every country has known periods in its history when an exaggerated impatience of restraint has led individuals, whole classes, and even single states to desert the common national cause and nurse their individual independence; and conversely the history of every nation can tell of governments which believed that they had adequately secured the authority of the state when they had forced obedience on reluctant subjects.

Even if this belief held good for former periods, it is a delusion to-day, when the demand for a supreme effort against the enemy includes the demand for internal freedom. Just as the army never fails our great commanders in the field when they ask for an unprecedented effort, because it is permeated with the national spirit of trust and self-sacrifice, so in time of peace we can only be great and happy if the state rests on a sense of national community, and the individual German gives his free assent to the law which binds all.

Your Royal Highness has not been permitted to continue the beneficent works of peace which began with your accession to the task of government. The war has come with its imperious and inexorable demands. It has laid on Your Royal Highness the heaviest of all a ruler's tasks, to lead a loyal and a loved people through sorrow and need.

. . . But moral plagues have followed in the wake of every long and onerous war in the past. It would be presumption to imagine that any belligerent nation can remain untouched. This danger threatens us too, but it can be conjured away if our intellectual leaders remain conscious of their duty to act, as Plato put it, as guardians and physicians of the people's soul.

It would go ill with the nation which thought that it could lower the torch of the Christian spirit during the war and be able to lift it up again in its pride and strength after the war is over. Such a country would have forfeited its claim to be a torch-bearer of civilization.

In every country there are demagogues untroubled by any such anxiety. The enemy Governments even regard it as a national duty to see that the temper of hate and revenge is carried safely over into the time of peace, and to anchor it by conventions which will make peace, when it comes, a continuation of the war with different weapons. Truly, he would be an evil counsellor who called upon the German nation to take

an example from Clemenceau and Lloyd George and their new paganism. And so it comforts us to know that Your Royal Highness, true to the pattern of your mother, our honoured Grand Duchess Louise, thinks it the war-time duty of all the leading forces in Germany to loyally guard the moral values which have been tested and approved in the spiritual struggle of a thousand years, and in which we believed with every fibre of our being in time of peace.

Our national character and our historical development point us the way to this guardianship. Germany's constitution gives us opportunity for second thoughts ; we are not compelled to see in every passing effervescence of popular passion, in all the ups and downs of the popular mood an infallible revelation of the popular will to which our conscience must be sacrificed. " Mob rule," " lynch law," " boycotting " of opponents, " pogroms " of aliens, all the names given by the Western democracies to their tyrannous customs, will, we trust, always remain as foreign to our nature as they are to our language.

It may be that the British, French and Americans really believe in the caricature of Germany which their venomous propaganda holds up to their eyes. We know our enemies as they do not and will not know us. We are able to differentiate, and it is therefore our duty to be just in our judgment and not to close our ears when indignant protest rises up from the depths of the enemy peoples themselves against the utterance of a base and brutal temper.

We have not always enjoyed such freedom of judgment. We have had our age of intolerance, which we have had to fight and overcome in centuries of fratricidal strife.

The settlement of Germany's internal, political and religious differences has been a spiritual preparation on a small scale for the work of co-operation between the nations. There have, however, been long stretches in our history when the rallying of all our proud and wilful stocks into a great, voluntary national unity seemed as utopian as it seems to-day that the time can ever come when the struggling, hating nations of to-day who are undergoing unheard of sufferings at each other's hands, will join to form one great human community, which has never yet been " given " but which is " given to us to realize " by the religious conscience of mankind and especially to us Germans by our greatest thinker, Immanuel Kant.

The unity of the German Empire only became possible because men's faith in this ideal never perished even in the darkest days of German history. And so those who honestly

care for the far-off ideal of international co-operation must not lose faith in their high hope, however suspicious the present temper of our enemies may make the phrase " League of Nations " appear to us.

We are still at war. In Britain, France and America the will to annihilation raises its head more shamelessly than ever. Their old illusions, shattered long ago, crop up again. Again they will be shattered. We have no need to exhort ourselves to unity. Every act and every utterance of the enemy Governments calls out to us : " Close the ranks ! "

The storm which threatens our national life is severe and is lasting long. Who doubts that we shall weather it ? . . . '

Solf and I were generally applauded on the Right and on the Left. The Conservatives thanked Solf in particular for his proud language. The Kaiser telegraphed me his approval. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* was not satisfied with the half measures which I appeared to recommend in internal politics, and demanded the parliamentary regime which I was fain to stave off.

What surprised me most was a favourable notice (26th August, 1918) of my speech in the *Welt am Montag*, which generally sympathized with the foreign policy of the Independent Social Democratic Party. The author, Hans Leuss, underlined my words : ' To-day the demand for a supreme effort against the enemy includes the demand for internal freedom.' Every line was fraught with anxiety for the spirit of the people at home. Leuss confirmed the impression his article made on me by a private letter dated 20th September :

' . . . Behind and beneath the confusion and restrictions of the public Press the present situation is shaping a *communis opinio* which regards catastrophes as inevitable and is beginning to adjust itself to them mentally.

Democratic politicians of calm judgment, political realists in the best sense of the term, recognize that only by keeping in touch with the existing order can the future be grounded on a safe and well prepared soil, and chaos and discord fatal to the new as well as to the old order forestalled. Before the war my friend, Dr. Franck, the Member for Mannheim, often referred to Your Highness in private conversation. . . . '

Leuss offered me his services ' in order to establish connections which might perhaps succeed in saving the country from a crisis and preventing more serious eventualities.'

My speech was hardly noticed abroad. But Solf's speech had an effect in England which far exceeded my expectations. I had thought that the mood of victory over there would make men deaf to any word of reason that came from Germany. But the platform duel between Balfour and Solf obviously appealed to the fighting instinct of the British nation. People were listening.

Solf's speech, as the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* learned from the Hague (27th August, 1918), would come near to turning the scale at the Inter-Allied Socialist Congress.

The British Government felt obliged to define its attitude. Lord Robert Cecil described Solf's utterances on Belgium as more reassuring than anything that had gone before, and attached importance to his declaration that the peace of Brest-Litovsk was only a frame.

But it would have been a mistake to attach too much importance to this echo. There could be no question of readiness for peace in the British Government. Still Lord Robert Cecil must have thought it necessary to take account of important groups who even now preferred negotiations to the decision by force of arms. People over there had still a strong respect for our defensive strength.

The British war party put more hope in a collapse of our morale than in victory in the field. With growing tension it took note of every poisonous party squabble, every new privation and sign of depression behind the German front, every captured army order against deserters, cowards, or men returning from leave.

Before our ' Black Day,' the military critic of the *Times* [1] had already allowed the secret of British strategy to slip out :

> ' The morale of the enemy must be broken. It is loss of morale not loss of ground, or men, or material that means victory or defeat. The enemy must cease to believe in himself or his leaders.' (*Times*, 7th August, 1918).

[1] Formerly ' Student of War ' on the *Manchester Guardian*.

The strategy demanded here had long been at work and was only too well aimed. Our political leaders had lost the confidence of the people beyond recovery. So much one knew. But now I was shocked to notice that hostile and malicious criticism was being directed against General Ludendorff too. I felt impelled to write him a letter full of confidence. For me he was still the man to whom we must turn for support in misfortune. He had proved his strength as no other had to turn the fate of Germany at the front. My associates expected and demanded still more from him. They believed that the initiative must be taken by him if the enemy's political attack on the German home front was to be beaten off.

Rohrbach wrote the following letter to General Ludendorff on 26th August :

' May I take the liberty to submit the following notes to Your Excellency. Since the beginning of the enemy's partial successes on the Western front, popular feeling among our masses as well as among the educated classes, as Your Excellency must know, is depressed to an alarming extent ; and exaggerated rumours of a *decline in the fighting morale of our troops* is making it sink lower and lower. I am in fairly good touch with both high and low, and feel obliged to express my fear that we are faced with the possibility of an internal collapse, if nothing decisive is done to restore courage at home.

The crowning disaster would be that the Reichstag should meet and then that a Government without strengthened authority should face a mass of members who have lost their heads, especially Majority members. I hear that there is an idea in these quarters of passing something like a new Peace Resolution, a declaration of readiness to adopt Wilson's ideas or something similar. If it comes to this in the Reichstag, our position will be one of the greatest danger, for such a proof of weakness in Germany would *give such an impetus to the enemy war spirit* that the existing peace currents would be completely submerged and the war parties would be able to demand the greatest sacrifices from their peoples in the war against us. *On our side on the other hand, such a show of weakness would make a moral recovery almost impossible.*

I have the deepest respect for the personality and statesmanlike devotion of our venerable Chancellor, but I fear that at

his advanced age he could not succeed in remaining master of the situation if panic breaks out in the House. *I therefore can see no other way of escape than that Your Excellency in addition to the task of creating a military situation which will reassure public opinion should also take steps for the moral renewal of the home front.*[1] Your Excellency is as capable of the one as of the other. I cannot think that it will be very difficult to restore the shaken courage of the population if only the right means are applied. But for this one thing is absolutely necessary, and that is that the requisite measures must not be taken by politicians in whose case everybody can see that they are only abandoning their former political creed or lack of creed under stress of necessity or of General Foch. In that case our game would be up. Big and decisive steps must be taken to restore the sinking courage of the people, to revive an unbending national will to hold out, and to give us once more the great moral impetus which alone can save us.

I can assure Your Excellency—and I am in really close touch with the mind of our people—that mere political tacticians, mere organizers or even what are called strong men will not be equal to the task of reviving the national spirit. The people will not follow them. It is longing now, all unknown to itself, for men of strong moral character and transparent purity of will, men able to fight the battle of ideas and to release all the strength that flows from the feeling of our own better right and the moral inferiority of the enemy cause. If we succeed not only in maintaining a victorious defence in the West, but also in launching a boldly conceived moral offensive on the enemy countries in order to deprive the war they are fighting of its character of a " people's war for a just cause," a collapse of the enemy war will is to be expected.

To restore the situation at home the chief thing is to make clear to the German people how absolutely vain the idea is that we could obtain a tolerable peace by compliance at the present moment, or that the enemy Governments, which are in the service of the war-mongering parties, know any other resolve than to destroy Germany. Once our people understands this—as it certainly does not do as yet—and we are appealed to to throw in all our moral strength and faith in our better right, we are safe. At the same time the strong points in our own political and material position and the weak points in the enemy position must be skilfully shown up. That also can be done in a convincing manner.

[1] My italics.

It is not the business of this letter to go into details. If Your Excellency wishes to hear me further on the matter, I am personally at your service. Your Excellency knows as well as all of us that it is impossible to win this war for Germany and assert our future existence, unless we contrive to restore the shaken morale and wavering resolution of the home population. An Imperial Government bent on working against the Army Command or without the Army Command at such an hour, would spell ruin ; and so would a military dictatorship, which would only throw open the ranks of the people to the influence of enemy propaganda more than is the case at present, and would make an end of all devotion. We need a Government which has an eye both to soldierly feeling and to the popular temper and can win the hearty support of the Reichstag Majority by a show of moral strength. May it be the privilege of Your Excellency to speak the decisive word in the decisive quarter, the word which will give us a political guidance capable of providing our fighting army and its General Staff with a revived home front on which it can lean and from which it can draw strength.'

By the end of August the fears and misgivings with which one looked forward to the future were no longer of a general character. I was informed of quite definite dangers which had to be guarded against at once :

1. In Austria our defeat had had a more terrible effect than the collapse of the Austrian offensive on the Piave.[1] There was quite open talk of the destruction of Prussian Militarism as a desirable solution of the World War. Our handling of the Polish question had been more than clumsy. Even loyal Austrians were offended by the form which our resistance to the Austro-Polish solution had taken ; we had declared that we would be satisfied with minor frontier rectifications if an independent Polish State came into being ; but that if Poland were to come under the Habsburg sceptre, a large slice of Polish territory must fall to Prussia. Austria laid stress on the Austro-Polish solution mainly on grounds of internal prestige, since in case an Independent Poland were set up, Galicia must be lost. *Austria is in urgent need of peace and is seeking peace without paying due regard to us.*

[1] Cp. A. v. Cramon, *Unser oesterreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege*, Berlin, 1920, p. 174.

2. A new peace step by the Reichstag is said to be imminent. From Haeften's bureau I had the following letter :

> ' At Hertling's next cross-examination it seems that new fetters are to be laid on him by the Majority ; the real motives are exactly what they were in Michaelis' case, namely that they just have no confidence in him. Erzberger is planning a big campaign to respond to Wilson's ideas and Wilson's vocabulary. *If the Peace Resolution was a cry of distress to the enemy in July* 1917, *the new Resolution which is being prepared will have the effect all over the world of a " hands up " by the German people before the American idea.*'

3. On 2nd September Bavaria intends to discuss the question of a peace offer in the Bundesrat. Crown Prince Rupprecht informed me of this and approved his Government's step : ' The military situation, which has again grown considerably worse since my last letter,[1] seems to demand rapid action. Time is working against us—and the longer we delay, the less favourable becomes the military situation, and we must make peace, even if it costs us deplorable sacrifices, before there is a further weakening of our military strength.' [2]

I was able to have a talk with Dr. Dueringer, Minister and Baden Plenipotentiary in the Bundesrat, before his departure for Berlin. Like me, he was convinced that a change of Government would mean far more for peace than a peace offer and indeed that an advance by Hertling's Government at the present moment could only encourage the enemy.

The Bavarian move was hard to counter. The Bavarian

[1] 15th August, see above, p. 319.

[2] In the same letter (31st August, 1918) Crown Prince Rupprecht had written : ' That Hertling's resignation, and speediest possible resignation, would be a blessing, is also the view of our minister, v. Dandl ; Hertling, in a word, is too old and has almost lost any will of his own. The Emperor Karl, as he said to me not long ago, got the same impression of Hertling. Even in Hertling's own party the opinion is held that he is no longer equal to his duties, that he has become merely the pliable tool of Ludendorff, who only keeps him in power because he understands how to handle the Reichstag. Dandl shares my opinion that you are the most suitable man for the post of Chancellor, and I have been able to bring the same thing home to other people.'

Prime Minister, von Dandl, spoke in a very serious tone. He read passages from the pessimistic memorandum of Hellingrath, the Bavarian War Minister, and warned the Government against waiting until the Reichstag seized the initiative, because such an initiative might involve crowns. Dandl was in complete accord with the opinion of Crown Prince Rupprecht and *recommended that we should get into touch with Britain, who would be more powerful this year than next*; in 1919 the preponderance would lie with America. He concluded with the demand that the Prussian Franchise problem should be solved as soon as possible.

Weizsaecker, the Wuerttemberg Minister, spoke, if possible, in a still more anxious tone. 'Our sovereigns have an undoubted right to be told what in the opinion of the Supreme Command are our chances of being able to fight on next year. We have been living too long in a dream of security; now the nation ought to know that everything is at stake.'

Count Hertling and v. Hintze, the Foreign Secretary, admitted the seriousness of the situation. Hertling said, however, that the depression was going too far. We had had a disappointment in our offensive but neither had the enemy succeeded in breaking through. He could not say whether it was intended on our side to undertake a further offensive in 1918; for he purposely avoided, in the interest of secrecy, to ask for information on military details. The question of man power was very serious, both quantitatively and qualitatively. It had been decided to keep a close eye on the situation, and to carefully consider how to get into touch with our opponents so that the right moment for conversations might be seized. Count Hertling then sketched the minimum demands which Germany must hold in readiness: 'The peace in the East to be made definitive, the maximum of *désintéressement* in Belgium, which we were ready to restore, but only in so far as no enemy power had greater advantages then we. In France, the maximum of interest in Briey and Longwy.'

Von Hintze opposed the Bavarian proposal, giving excellent reasons. He said that victory had made the enemy so

arrogant for the moment that all possibility of negotiation was excluded, and it was only after the frenzy had subsided that threads could be spun between us and the enemy, when he became aware that we were a long way from allowing peace to be dictated to us. Herr v. Hintze pointed out that unfortunately Austria did not realize this. Vienna was on the point of turning to the enemy. The form in which Austria thought of winding up the War was more like the cry of a drowning man. He announced that he was on the point of going to Vienna in order, if possible, to hold up the Austrian peace step.[1]

Col. von Winterfeldt, the representative of the Supreme Command, then reported on the military situation. The present battles, he said, were the hardest thing that commanders and troops had experienced in the whole war. The enemy was out for a new decision. The battle already covered a front of 100 km., and a further extension must be reckoned with. The most serious question was that of man power; the questions of prestige and of territory were of secondary importance. We must be sparing of men—that was now the chief matter.

Col. von Winterfeldt was just in course of proving that certain progress had been made in fighting the tanks—when he was interrupted by a telephone message from General Ludendorff. He handed the meeting the staggering news that the Wotan position had been overrun. Two divisions, one behind the other, had been overpowered by massed tank attacks. Winterfeldt said in conclusion:

'The situation in the view of the Supreme Command is tense and serious, but the Field-Marshal and Ludendorff are nowise downhearted. The Supreme Command shared the general desire that the war should not be indefinitely prolonged. The present onslaught of the enemy was also clearly made with the intention of ending the war more quickly.'

[1] Cf. Cramon, *op. cit.* p. 176 ff. and the 'Chronologische Uebersicht der Entwicklung des oesterreichisch-ungarischen Friedensvorschlags,' *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 4.

Dr. Dueringer supported Col. von Winterfeldt. No more unfavourable moment than the present could be imagined for peace moves ; every mention of peace meant only a confession of defeat and weakness. He spoke with great firmness on the necessity of doing something for the encouragement of the home population.[1]

Dueringer told me in a letter describing this meeting, dated 6th September, 1918, that individual comments had had a much more defeatist tone than the official report gave to understand.

He also informed me of a conversation which the Bavarian Prime Minister had had with him after the dinner which followed in the Chancellor's palace. Dandl had given him to understand that it was now in his opinion time that Prince Max of Baden took over the office of Chancellor.

' You (the Government of Baden) must naturally be opposed to this ; but I should welcome it, firstly, because it would prove that a member of a reigning house can hold such an office, and secondly because of the respect in which the Prince is held abroad.'

Dr. Dueringer added :

' My relations with Dandl are by no means such that he should offer me his personal confidence. He was therefore addressing me as the Baden Minister. Hence I felt it my duty to inform the Grand Duke.'

At the same time I learnt of a memorandum which two General Staff officers, who were then unknown to me, had presented to Ludendorff on 12th August ; in it, they demanded a revival of our inner forces for the stiffening of our resistance. They mentioned Prince Max of Baden as the suitable man to become Chancellor and carry through the new mobilization.[2]

[1] This description of the meeting is based on the report of Boden, the Ambassador of Brunswick.

[2] One of the two General Staff officers was Major von Schweinitz, our military attaché at the Hague. In the resumé of his reports from the Hague published in the *Grenzboten* (80 Jahrg, 24th December, 1921, p. 414 f.) he writes on this subject : ' The fact that I proposed Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor has almost induced me to leave this book unwritten. The right thing to have done then would have been to entrust Prince

On 3rd September Hahn was summoned to his chief. Herr v. Haeften said to him that what made the present crisis so serious was not the actual state of our material strength but the moral disease which was affecting the mind of the home population and partly also of the soldiers.

'Only a Government which has the confidence of the people can help to surmount this crisis.'

Hahn informed me of the contents of this conversation the same day.

At the same time I received confirmation from General Ludendorff that a catastrophe at the front was not feared. He wrote me on 5th September :

> 'I hope that I can certainly hold the position against the enemy's gigantic efforts to force a decision, so that the disappointment in the enemy camp will make our opponents more disposed to peace conversations.'

On 6th September Hahn came to St. Blasien at the instructions of Col. v. Haeften to report to me. His report made it clear that the threatening catastrophe could still be averted, but that it was bound to come if we waited and did nothing.

We set down in writing the essential features of the situation at home and abroad ; and I drew the necessary conclusions. A programme was drawn up.

Buelow with the liquidation of the war. Two people who in good and in evil fortune saw clearer than any of their German contemporaries, Her Majesty the Empress and Count Eulenburg, the Minister of the Household, clung throughout the whole war to Buelow as candidate for the Chancellorship. Even a short time before his death the Minister of the Household expressed the hope that Buelow's political rôle might not yet have been played out. It might reasonably come to fulfilment in the Presidential election. The fact that I did not propose Buelow in August 1918 was due to my wish to fight President Wilson with his own weapons. But such technique was out of the question for Buelow. I need not describe the subsequent conduct of my candidate. I naturally did not think of him as a " Boss of the Show " (Macher von 's Ganze), to use the Berlin expression, but as a figure head. When the Prince was finally appointed, it came about in a way diametrically opposed to my wishes. I wanted to announce our transformation with a " fanfare " and not with a " chamade." ' All that I have to add to these unkind words is that Major v. Schweinitz must have known when he wrote them whose fault it was that my Chancellorship began with a ' chamade ' and not, as he and I intended, with a ' fanfare.'

I. The One Favourable Factor in our Situation Abroad

Why are the British attacking in spite of the warning of serious experts not to fall into the error of 1917 and seek to force a decision with insufficient forces but to defer it until they have an undoubted superiority in the air and the full weight of the Americans on the spot ?

The answer is that the British want to make an end.

(*a*) True, the submarine war is not the decisive factor. But as yet no solution has been found of the problem how to transport and maintain an American army of millions and at the same time to keep the home populations of the Entente in a healthy condition.

(*b*) In city circles and among elder statesmen the consciousness is gaining ground that an American victory is a British defeat.

1. ' We shall be hypothecated to America.' [1]

2. ' America must become the leading naval power '— declaration of the American Director of Shipping.

3. ' An empty port of London and an empty Liverpool is not a brilliant vision ; where we will hardly walk, America will fly.' (*The Nation.*)

(*c*) Pacifist infection of the British munition centres.

(*d*) The danger to French Socialists of contagion from British pacifism.

(*e*) The fear of the Jingoes (Barnes and Wilson) among the Labour leaders that pacifism would sweep the trade unions.

(*f*) The continual warnings of the British jingoes against the danger of a political offensive by Germany.

To sum up, the present effort of the Entente finds its chief explanation in the vulnerability of the British home front. The British are, of course, hoping that their material superiority will bring about the collapse in Germany before this year is out. If we then succeed in dashing this British hope by restoring the morale of our home population and of the front, a serious psychological reaction may

[1] Cp. Inchcape's speech in the House of Lords on the burden of taxation in Britain as a result of indebtedness to America.

be expected in Britain, and that would be the moment for German foreign policy to take decisive action.

II. What do our Enemies expect and what are they hoping for?

1. They expect in Germany:

(*a*) A moral collapse of our home front.

(*b*) That the Reichstag will present its bill at the end of this campaign:

The advisers of the Crown have failed, they have not held the reins of the Empire in their hands for a single moment, but the soldiers always controlled the situation. But the soldiers have also failed, they have not only awakened illusions, but have believed in them themselves; they have misjudged the power of the enemy and have underestimated the moral as well as the material and numerical strength of their opponents.

The German people has no longer any confidence in the leaders chosen by the Kaiser, whether bureaucrats or soldiers; it wants now to take its fate into its own hand.

2. The enemy reckons on strikes, passive resistance in the army, etc.

3. In this situation they expect that the Reichstag will present and carry the demand for parliamentary government. The new Ministry of Scheidemann, Erzberger, etc., would then be declared by Wilson fit to be negotiated with, on condition that the Alsace-Lorraine question and the Peace of Brest-Litovsk were also submitted to the international tribunal. Germany would be in a penitent mood, either already ripe for the Entente peace, or, if the war went on, she would soon be so worn down that the internal collapse would take the form of a catastrophe.

III. Where are things in Germany drifting to?

1. One system, the system of waiting for military successes, has collapsed.

The men who represent this system still form the Government. The German people does not recognize them as its

leaders. This did no harm so long as the majority of the German people saw in Hindenburg and Ludendorff not only great military commanders, but also their guides to peace. No one any longer believes in the idea which stood behind the whole of our war policy, that our military successes would force the enemy into a position where they would be compelled to accept a peace such as Germany desires.

2. So the German people now wants to see a Government which is more than a political appendage to the Supreme Command. Germany has awakened to a consciousness of her lack of leadership. Home and front have both together lost their confidence that the fate of Germany is in good hands. On all sides there is a flagging of energy at the moment when everything depends on home and front throwing in their last ounce. They are now infecting each other ; troops are yielding positions which they could still hold, and at home nearly everybody has given way.

(*a*) The *Vorwaerts* is demanding a new peace offer.

(*b*) Erzberger and Scheidemann are working for a new peace resolution which amounts to a capitulation to the ideas and phrases of Wilson. We may expect that its contents would be roughly as follows :

' We *have* abolished militarism in Germany, we *do* now determine our own fate, our Government *is* now responsible, we *are* now fit to be negotiated with, we *are* willing to renounce the idea of might in favour of the idea of right.'

The whole would have the effect in enemy countries of a journey to Canossa.

(*c*) Erzberger and Scheidemann intend to draw up a general indictment against the Supreme Command and the Imperial Government. They are demanding parliamentary government with the tacit approval of the National Liberals and the Centre, and that for the undignified reason that it would contribute to the weakening of the enemy's war will. They hope to carry their demands by proving that the powers which have governed Germany up to now—the Kaiser, the Imperial Government and the Army Command—have proved their incapacity to guide the destinies of Germany.

(*d*) The Left Democratic Press likewise demands a parliamentary government; to attract the National Liberals Theodor Wolff wants to guarantee Stresemann a place in this Government.

(*e*) The National Liberals cannot be depended on; Stresemann is manifestly inclining to the Reichstag Majority. His last speech could have been delivered equally well by a member of the Left parties.

3. News comes from the front that since faith in the infallibility of the German Supreme Command has vanished, there is a sudden longing in the army for political leadership. In this desire the German people, soldiers and workers alike, is therefore at one.

THIS DEMAND MAY PROVE OUR SALVATION. WHO WILL TAKE OVER THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP?

1. The Reichstag is hesitating too long, even from its own point of view. If it had any self-respect, it would feel the need of meeting at this critical moment, of demanding an account of the situation, and of co-operating towards a new national uprising which will make it possible for us to tide over the great crisis. Instead it is in recess and the party leaders are in training for the great trial of strength in the autumn. In any other country Parliament would to-day insist on being convened. But they are waiting till Germany is still more worn out, and believe that the great disillusionment which is to be expected at the close of the military campaign if no peace comes, will be the psychological moment to carry their claims. Much as one welcomes the self-elimination of the Reichstag at present, yet from the point of view of parliamentary government it is moral suicide for the Reichstag to renounce the rôle of guardian at this grave hour, a rôle to which it thought it had a right, but for which it has obviously no capacity.

2. But neither can the present Government bring about an improvement in our world position at this hour. It held its peace at the decisive moments of the war, when its words would have been deeds.

3. At this moment of interregnum the Crown has still another opportunity to act without pressure from below. It can summon a Government by its own free decision which will paralyze the Reichstag Majority, and knock its chief weapon out of its hand before it can use it, by itself coming forward as the leader for whom the German people is longing in its hour of need.

What must the Chancellor of such a Government do?

1. He and his Ministry must say not a word about peace, but must summon all the resources of the nation to ward off the deadly danger. They must leave no room for doubt that they refuse to yield to enemy arrogance and are determined to continue the war against *it*. Without expressly saying it, their whole language must sound like a challenge to those elements in Germany whose provocative war aims have strengthened the enemy will to hold out, and also to those elements in Germany whose undignified courtship of peace has contributed to the strengthening of the enemy home fronts. They must nail the enemy lies to the counter.

The German people found it hard enough to put up with the anathema of half the world against its good name so long as we were in a position to repay the impudence of our enemies with bloody defeats. But to-day when we are limited to a toilsome defensive it is more necessary than ever to take up the battle for our right and establish our good name in the world.

2. The first measure of the new Government would have to be the carrying out of the Franchise Reform and then the Reichstag would have to be summoned at a moment when it was still enjoying its holiday rest. The new man would open it with a great fighting speech:

No peace without the defeat of enemy arrogance.

The danger is great, but if everybody helps it will be overcome.

The submarine war would have to be reduced to its right proportions;—not the decisive factor but a terribly dangerous factor for the enemy.

There must be no note of frivolous optimism.

3. Let no one think that a third course remains in the military dictatorship. Unless Germany sees in her Government her leaders on the way to a peace of understanding, then our home front collapses beyond recovery—whether by mere passive resistance against which no suppression can avail, or in a revolutionary form, does not matter here. There remains only a choice between the two other possibilities:

Either we leave it to Erzberger and Scheidemann to put themselves forward at the end of the month as leaders on the way to a peace of understanding, and to be accepted as such, or the Crown itself appoints these leaders from among men whose prestige at home and abroad permits them to say not a word about peace at this hour and yet visibly strengthen the peace atmosphere in the enemy countries.

The choice cannot be doubtful.

We were in the midst of these discussions when Conrad Haussmann arrived (7th September).[1] I had asked him to visit me at St. Blasien to inform me on the parliamentary situation. He had just been in Switzerland.

In our previous conversations the natural cheerfulness of his sunny temperament had been uppermost. He would speak with artistic pleasure of this or that move of his.

To-day I was alarmed by his seriousness and insistency. He spoke in a tone of reproach: His whole policy, he said, was based on the Kaiser being enlightened at the right time and acting at the right time. I had always given the cue that there must be no parliamentary crisis. Crises got on the soldiers' nerves. Naumann and he had always worked on these lines. But what if the Kaiser was not being informed of the facts? Then it would be a thousand times better that the summoning of the Main Committee should be taken in hand and the crisis deliberately precipitated, for it would break out in the form of panic as soon as a disaster occurred, either on the German front or in Austria.

I asked Haussmann what was the attitude of his group and

[1] Cf. Haussmann, *Schlaglichter*, p. 211 f.

of the other Majority Parties to my name and my programme. He replied : ' My party will unanimously support Prince Max of Baden in the programme which I confidently expect from him. That is certainly my opinion. The Social Democrats will feel Hertling's resignation to be a deliverance and will go with you if the Government programme is such that the entry of one or two representatives of Social Democracy into the Government can be expected and demanded. The Centre, if the breach with Hertling is carried out without offence and another member of the Centre enters the Government, will to a large extent support the policy of Your Highness. . . . Among the population the change will be greeted with hope and welcomed as a great event. . . . '

But then he put the question how much freedom of action would the new Chancellor have with the Kaiser and the Army Command.

I replied that without such freedom I would not accept the Chancellorship, but that I must be assured of the same independence in dealing with the Reichstag. I would want to have three representatives of the Majority Parties in high office. I was, however, an opponent of French parliamentarism, which only allowed deputies to become Ministers. I would refuse to dispense with the co-operation of officials and of men from the liberal professions. Further, I could allow no undue interference by the legislature with the executive, such as had been successfully attempted under Michaelis. I mentioned von Payer, von Rechenberg and Ebert as the parliamentary colleagues whom I wished to have. I had Herr von Kardorff in view as Chief of the Chancellery, and thought of having Herr Haussmann himself as an intimate colleague in the office of Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Haussmann professed his belief in the organic development of our own system of government and his dislike of the formal imitation of Western institutions. To-day my programme and I myself would be gladly welcomed, and it was to be hoped I would still be welcomed in three weeks' time ; but the pressure of unrest was great. Things were drifting

towards a development in which a pure parliamentary system would be demanded, and then the choice would only lie between a Fehrenbach Ministry and a Scheidemann Ministry.

'If Your Highness takes over the Chancellorship in this form and with these ends in view, I can honestly co-operate, and can support such modification of parliamentarism as is involved in the Chancellorship of a Prince. If this arrangement were to break down or fail, I am not sure that a brusque demand for pure parliamentarism in December or January would not prove a powerful means of influencing world opinion in the direction of peace.'

Haussmann's agreement with my foreign programme was unequivocal: 'No peace offer, but a proclamation of war aims and a call for national defence.' In support of our view he quoted two important documents which he had brought with him from Switzerland.

One of these was a letter from Hermann Stegemann dated 27th August, 1918:

> 'The events which are now culminating in the withdrawal of the German Army on the line Cambrai-St. Quentin were bound to result when Foch manœuvred his attacking masses into the centre of the movement, so that they were able on 18th of July to pass to a counter-attack from the flank. It is useless to ask how matters were allowed to come to this strategic pass, but one must face the fact that the re-establishment of the strategical situation on rearward lines is a necessary condition of the further military evolution, and that the German Army Command will need all its great power of concentration and its gifts of combination to carry through this thankless task.
>
> On the other hand the political leaders of the German Empire must have a clear conception of the military situation. They must seize the offensive themselves if they are to save the war, which refuses to be handled on purely military lines and tends to slip out of the hands of the soldiers, from "eternalization."
>
> For I hold that a great political offensive is absolutely necessary, and an offensive which deprives the enemy of the political arguments which have raised his war will above the mere military level and converted it into a national determination.

The German Government has always remained on the political defensive against its formidable opponent while the Army Command has rightly, and with an unbounded aggressiveness which borders on audacity, bent its energy on the offensive. A political offensive means simply to clear up and have done with the Belgian question, the most powerful agency at work on Britain and America—whether rightly or wrongly is neither here nor there—and to face the enemy clad in the political armour which he himself knows how to wear and display with such mastery. In this sense a declaration that Belgium is *not* to be a pawn, that Brest-Litovsk is only a frame inside which the Eastern states are to take what form they choose, and finally the investiture of the German Empire in modern constitutional forms is neither a renunciation nor a weakening of Germany but a war weapon than which nothing sharper and more disarming can be imagined. It would release the British Liberals, the American doctrinaires and Germany's friends in neutral countries from the embarrassment into which the spell of this war has cast them—to the misfortune of the world.

I am giving fresh reasons for old demands because the war situation calls for a restatement of the case. The fact that I can always go on finding fresh reasons for them is perhaps a stronger testimony to their soundness than the military hap--penings which have, alas! proved me only too correct. A great political deed can deliver Germany and however it is received—might possibly give the German Army Command true freedom of action, but a freedom restricted to their proper sphere.'

The second testimony consisted of notes of a conversation which Stegemann had had with Col. Wattenwyl on 24th August, 1918, in Haussmann's presence. Its quintessence was set out as follows :

1. On 25th August the number of prisoners was already more than 100,000 and losses in guns 4000.

2. The submarines had not sunk a single American transport.

3. A strategical offensive is pointless since there can be no idea either of an advance to the Channel or of the capture of Paris, or of rolling up the enemy front.

4. A tactical offensive would have a value in making possible free selection of rearward lines, which is impossible now when

the pressure of the enemy offensive is too close to permit freedom of action.

5. . . . It is the intention of America to occupy the whole Vosges front and to collect such a powerful numerical superiority there by the spring that America can capture Alsace-Lorraine and make "a present of it to France." America is therefore thinking of peace next year, when she will be able to appear as victor, while France wants "victory" this year.

6. In a military sense, everything depends on the number of Ludendorff's reserves, and what their morale is like. Bray would appear to have been held only by the 27th Wuerttemberg Division, otherwise there would have been a catastrophe, since the place was of decisive importance. The other German troops had *all* given way on that occasion. Unless Ludendorff has good new troops and new ideas, the retreat on the line of the Meuse would be the most correct course from a purely military point of view.

7. The advance to the Marne and the operation at Rheims had been Ludendorff's first great mistake. The pushing forward of this offensive had been a greater mistake than the excessive advance on 4th to 7th September, 1914. Foch had now been practically forced and invited to a counter-offensive against the two German wedges after he had collected large masses of troops between these not very deeply echeloned wedges as a cover.

8. The destruction of the highly dangerous tanks cannot keep pace with their manufacture; a single American factory is turning out a tank every twenty minutes.

9. It must be in Germany's power to bring the battle to a standstill on rearward lines for a few weeks or months. *Then, but not till then, a big political move is advisable because a standstill will disappoint the hopes of the Entente.* A peace to-day—unless Ludendorff has fresh troops—means the loss of the whole of Alsace-Lorraine, a peace in nine months also the left bank of the Rhine. The political leaders must find out exactly what the soldiers intend to do.

This was a grim picture of our situation.

The home front in danger.

The battle front will hold, but only if nothing happens at home and if the soldiers are given reason to hope that the Government is leading the country on the way to peace.

Nothing but our programme could now close the rift in the people. I had now become standard-bearer of our movement, and had no choice but go forward. Round-about ways were recommended to me at this juncture but I found them distasteful. Nor was a day to be lost.

No man in his senses could think that I was acting from ambition.

I was fully conscious that my knowledge and experience did not suffice for the necessary work of detail, but I had allies able to support and supplement me.

My name and my programme would act as a disruptive force in enemy countries and as a rallying point at home. I hoped to be able to revive the waning spirit of self-sacrifice. I trusted myself to call Lansdowne to the lists, to fight the Franchise through, to transform the Majority, which to-day wanted to lead, into a loyal following, and the Fatherland Party into a no less loyal opposition.

The enemy would have difficulty in representing me as unfit to negotiate with at the given moment, if the result of their offensive should disappoint them.

I considered whether other representatives of our movement were not better qualified. If my voice carried further, it was not due to me, but to my position.

I wrote the Kaiser and placed myself at his disposal. I described the deadly peril as I saw it at the time, and added documents which could not fail to carry conviction. I summarized my programme as follows :

> 'A new broad basis must be created, extending from the Fatherland Party far into the Social Democratic Party.
>
> I would trust myself to find this basis. My sympathies were with the Pan-Germans when they demanded victory, but certainly not when they strengthened the enemy's power of resistance by insisting on provocative war aims and thus made victory more difficult. With patriotic men in the Majority parties I was united by our common recognition of the necessity that a great people must include the interests of humanity in its national purpose. But I would have none of that over-eagerness for peace with which the Reichstag Majority gave the enemy an impression of German weakness and merely

strengthened his will to war. Unless the differences are bridged over there can be no national uprising. The summoning of a new Government would hardly bring peace ; but it would lighten Germany's military effort and make the enemy effort more difficult.

I spoke to the Kaiser of the last opportunity that the German monarchy had to preserve its authority :

' It is the last chance for the monarchical idea in general. In the East it has collapsed miserably, in the Western democracies it is long since there has been any room for the free decision of a leading personality.

The Entente statesmen are not in a position to take momentous decisions dictated by their own conscience, in opposition to popular moods and passions ; they have always to wait until a wave of popular feeling backs what they see to be right.

It is otherwise in Germany. The monarchical tradition is still so strong in the people that a saving act of the Kaiser's, even if it startles and surprises the Reichstag, aye, and just because it startles and surprises, would to-day be hailed with gratitude by the people.'

The Kaiser replied to me on 11th September :

' I thank you from My heart, I deeply appreciate your unselfish loyalty and your friendship. Our views are essentially at one, I am working in this sense and have given all necessary instructions and made preparations. For the time being nothing more can be contemplated.

With true greetings.

WILHELM.'

CHAPTER VIII

DELAYED DECISIONS

(Second Half of September 1918)

The tension in September could hardly be borne. We stood helpless before the ruin of the nation which was coming to a head and which it would still have been in the power of man to avert. One awoke every morning with the anxious question: What has happened?—and breathed again in the evening to find that front and alliances had held. One clung to every hope that still seemed to offer a breathing space. Would the arrogance of the enemy not o'erleap itself? I heard that General Pershing demanded that Germany should return to the conditions existing before 1870.

The news from the Majority parties was better. The ambitious elements were not having their way. A strong counter-current, determined, in view of the military situation, to avoid any crisis, was holding them up. The leadership of Erzberger and Scheidemann would be accepted, but without enthusiasm, as something that was better than no leadership at all. Even among the Social Democrats there would be a sigh of relief if the Crown seized the initiative.

I had news from Berlin of a conversation with a Social Democratic leader which threw a vivid light on the conflicting moods in the party and was calculated to give rise to both anxiety and hope. The Social Democrat was discussing the future of Hertling's Government and passed the following possibilities in review:

1. Hertling's Government accepts our programme: renunciation of projects of personal union in the East and likewise of all annexations in the West, immediate reform of the franchise, repeal of Article 9.

In that case we have no handle to overthrow Hertling. It is however unlikely that one of us would then enter the Government. Nobody likes to join an unsound firm; we are tired of Hertling.

2. Hertling makes difficulties and the Majority brings him down. The result would be parliamentary government with Erzberger and Scheidemann. In that case Fehrenbach would be the logical Chancellor. He would also probably manage the thing better than most of the rest. To-day we would also accept Solf after his last speech, nor would we object to Brockdorff-Rantzau.

3. Hertling attempts to anticipate events and to form a coalition Ministry reaching from Westarp to Scheidemann. We would not take part in it, but would go into opposition and abide our time, which will certainly come. We have to-day a strong backing among the people and even among the soldiers. The men at the top, and we of course too, must then go through many painful experiences. As a German I hate to say it but—worse things have got to come.

My informant discussed a fourth possibility with the Socialist leader. ' Let us assume that the Crown seizes the initiative, that the Franchise comes with a clear indication that the will of the Kaiser is behind it, and that a new Chancellor is appointed who is fundamentally at one with the Reichstag Majority, would you then allow a Social Democrat to enter his Ministry ? '

The answer was :

' The experiences of this war have made me very sceptical. Have you ever known a case in history in which monarchs have come to see the truth at the right time ? At moments when signs of danger are appearing, but when the Crown can still save everything by its free initiative, its entourage always says : " Just remain firm. Danger demands a strong hand. Don't on any account give in, otherwise everything is lost." Every government that has feared revolution has staggered into disaster.

Believe me, the Hohenzollerns of to-day are like the rest ; they only act when it is too late. Things will be allowed to drift until events grow stronger than men.

It would be the first time in history that far-sighted

statesmanship had held up the car on the downward slope.'

'But if the new man were appointed and came before the Reichstag with a convincing programme, would your party then be ready to take a share of responsibility?'

The party leader replied without hesitation in the affirmative: 'We would throw in our whole strength to bring the plans of our enemies to grief, for we know quite well that Germany is lost if the Entente wins.'

Other news which I received confirmed me in the belief that if the Crown inspired confidence by a timely lead the patriotic Social Democrats would oppose the plan of extending the powers of Parliament by the method of crises.

But, I said to myself, the Crown must strike at once. The Inter-Party Committee would meet in a week; what was still an act of initiative would then appear to be a compromise with parliamentary ambitions; later still it would seem to be the product of fear and in a few months a capitulation by the monarch.

I was on the point of bringing the grave words of the Social Democratic leader to His Majesty's notice, but in the end I refrained. I felt that after the Kaiser's telegram I could not offer my advice again.

Unfortunately a conversation which had been arranged between me and Ebert also fell through, owing to a misunderstanding.

Then on 14th September came the Austrian Peace Offer to all the enemy powers. Herr von Hintze had not been able to prevent the 'cry of the drowning man,' which now found the echo it deserved. The very next day Reuter announced as the view of official quarters in Washington that Austria Hungary was on the verge of collapse. Only one reply was possible: 'Force to the bitter end, force without limit or restriction.' Britain also naturally maintained a negative attitude, but it was significant that Balfour did not venture on a plain 'No.' He shifted the responsibility on to Germany; pointing out that Payer had said not a word on the indemnification of Belgium:

'Until the leading men in Germany, the Army Command, the Kaiser, the Chancellor and the Reichstag are ready to define their intentions clearly and seek a solution which agrees with what the Allies consider necessary in the interest of justice, civilization and peace, discussions are fruitless.'

The Inter-Party Committee began its deliberations on 21st September. Conrad Haussmann placed his notes on these meetings at my disposal shortly before his death, and I must confess to-day that I did the Majority parties a grievous wrong when I warned the Kaiser against them at the beginning of September, saying that they would take advantage of our straits to pass peace resolutions and satisfy their parliamentary ambitions. Anyone who reads Haussmann's notes must endorse the following verdict:

The members see the realities of the situation, the necessity of a change of Government, and their duty to put the needs of the army before everything, even before the interests of the party and of individuals. But neither ambition nor qualification urges them to seek high responsibility; they are waiting impatiently for the initiative of Crown and Government. They only want to co-operate and therefore demand that parliamentary representatives should also be summoned to the Government. The Centre is anxious to avoid the express use of the word 'parliamentarisation.' Trimborn says on 23rd September, 1918:[1] 'We do not desire that "Parliamentarisation" should be explicitly brought forward as a demand. Such matters are left to a process of "organic development" . . . We cannot announce to the whole world that we have reformed. No agreement can yet be reached on the repeal of Article 9. There is still strong opposition to this in the Centre.'

The Social Democrats refuse to enter a Hertling Ministry; they declare their readiness to take part in a new Government, but they have no thought of taking over the leadership. They are making a sacrifice. This is clear in Ebert's words:

'It is a risky game for our party if we come in. But we could not come into Hertling's Ministry. Hertling's credit

[1] For the negotiations in the Inter-Party Committee on these days cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 217 ff.

is so completely exhausted—such is our unanimous conviction —that our sacrifice would do nothing for peace. Only yesterday I spoke to one of the biggest merchants in Hamburg and he told me that Hertling enjoys no confidence at home or abroad. We have no definite candidate.'

In all the negotiations from 20th to 23rd September there is no mention of any particular man whom the Inter-Party Committee or any party wants to take up. Even the negative determination to overthrow Hertling is non-existent. His position is regarded as untenable, but Hertling himself will have to see that he cannot remain. 'We do not want any wholesale overthrowing of Ministers,' says Haussmann. The Centre still holds fast to Hertling outwardly; Groeber and Herold still support him from conviction. But even the Right wing prefer that Hertling should go than that the Social Democrats should remain outside. Groeber goes so far as to say: 'I wish the Social Democrats would enter the Government. If that is the meaning of parliamentarisation, we are for it, too.'

The sharing of responsibility by the Social Democrats is desired more for the sake of the war than for the sake of peace. The expression 'Ministry of National Defence' crops up again and again; it is assuming the character of a programme.

'The anxiety of the Entente peoples lest the war should go on and their luck should change must be increased by the *most determined military resistance*.' In these words Haussmann is permitted to sum up the general feeling.

Nobody dares to speak of a peace offer. Fischbeck says: 'We must lay the chief stress on getting a strong Government and we can only get it if the Labour representatives are in the Government.'

The Social Democrats—the Party Committee and Reichstag Group—held a meeting on 23rd September and decided to enter a new Government under definite conditions. These amount to six points, and they deserve careful analysis:

> 'Unrestricted adherence to the Reichstag resolution of 19th July, 1917, along with a declaration of readiness to join a

League of Nations, based on the principle of a peaceful discussion of all disputes and general disarmament.'

In our position, this step was unavoidable.

'A completely unobjectionable declaration on the Belgian question, restoration of Belgium, with an understanding on indemnification, also restoration of Serbia and Montenegro.'

The second point still falls short of Bethmann-Hollweg's declaration of 4th August, 1914: 'We have done a wrong and we mean to make it good.'

'The peace of Brest-Litovsk and of Bukarest must not be an obstacle to a general peace; immediate introduction of civil administration in all occupied territories, democratic national assemblies to be set up at once.'

Solf's declaration: 'The peace of Brest-Litovsk is only a frame' had already pointed our policy along this path:

'Autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine; for all the states in the German Bund the universal, equal, secret and immediate franchise. The Prussian Landtag to be dissolved, unless the equal franchise emerges without delay from the deliberations of the Herrenhaus Committee.'

The demand for the dissolution of the Landtag is moderately expressed. The Herrenhaus is to be given a chance to avoid dissolution.

'Immediate repeal of all regulations by which freedom of assembly and the freedom of the Press have been restricted; the censorship may only be applied to purely military questions, questions of war strategy and tactics, movements of troops, manufacture of war material. Institution of a political office of control for all measures decreed on account of the state of siege, the removal of all military institutions which serve to exercise political influence.'

The new arrangements for the state of siege demanded here essentially corresponded to the intentions of Count Hertling and the wishes of most of the Governments of the Bund.

One point offered difficulty:

'Unity of the Imperial Government, elimination of irresponsible "rival governments," summoning of Government representatives from the parliamentary Majority or from

among men who represent the policy of the parliamentary Majority. Repeal of Article 9 of the Imperial Constitution ; the political publications of the Crown and of the military authorities must be communicated to the Chancellor before publication.

The repeal of Article 9 [1] was at variance with the federal spirit of the constitution, but in view of the federal ties of the Centre, the brake could perhaps still be applied. It was significant that the Social Democrats did not demand a parliamentary government after the French pattern. They did not desire that only members of parliament should be included in the Government. There was no trace of a claim that the individual parties in the coalition should be represented in the Government in proportion to their strength. There was no talk of a Reichstag initiative in the choice of persons.

On 24th September the Main Committee met. The Majority parties and Press showed no sign of panic. Every man who spoke was alive to the solemnity of the hour and impatient to help as far as lay in his power. The criticism on questions of fact was impersonal and free from malice.

Theodor Wolff struck the right note in the *Berliner Tageblatt* :

> ' In days like those through which we are now passing, the people must and will show that it treads its hard road without nervousness and confusion but with calm deliberation.'

Count Hertling caused surprise on 26th September by a speech in which he picked out the complaints on the handling of the state of siege from the Social Democrats' demands and to a considerable extent admitted the justice of the parties' grievances. He promised remedies—either the division of the duties so far entrusted to the military authorities between ' them and the peace-time civil authorities '—or

[1] Article 9 : Every member of the Bundesrat has the right to appear in the Reichstag and must on demand be heard there at any time so that he may represent the views of his Government, even in cases where these views have not been adopted by the majority of the Bundesrat. No one can at the same time be a member of the Bundesrat and of the Reichstag.

'the dovetailing of adequate civil elements into the military bodies who would still have the final decision.'

This advance reduced the Majority parties to embarrassment. The Centre felt itself unable to do anything against Hertling after his intention to remain had become clear.

The same day the startling news arrived that Bulgaria had applied to the enemy. Under the pressure of the serious military straits between the Vardar and Czerna Malinof authorized the Commander-in-Chief of the Army in the Field to propose the suspension of hostilities to the Commander-in-Chief of the Entente Armies at Salonika and to begin negotiations for an armistice and the conclusion of peace.

On the evening of the same day the Army communiqué brought the first news of Foch's big new offensive :

'In the Champagne and between the Argonnes and the Meuse Franco-American attacks began on a wide front after artillery preparation lasting eleven hours. The enemy failed to break through. The struggle for our position continues.' (Communiqué of 26th September, 1918.)

Haussmann realized that not another moment must be lost. As matters now stood, he desired less than ever a solution forced by Parliament ; he also knew that the parties did not agree quickly enough at times when it was necessary to act with lightning rapidity. And so he wrote in his despair to Col. von Haeften (26th September, 1918) :

'Precious time has been lost. What is being done to-day, is being done under pressure of the defection of our ally, who is following in the steps of Burian and acting as his pace-maker. The effect here at home and at the front will be profound. Resignation and radicalism is becoming the predominant feeling here, while the Entente's exultation will soar higher than ever.

If the worst is not to happen, and if we are not to lose our heads, this dreadful era of scruples must come to an end ; we must no longer refrain from political action. An attempt must be made to work to a unified plan. Neither the Army Command nor the Crown, with their fear of " parliamentarisa-

tion," is serving the highest interests of the State—for this is perhaps the last ditch.

Count Hertling has for weeks past been no source of strength; if his Chancellorship lasts not a trace of hope will remain.

Prince Max was yesterday, as he was a year ago, a great chance and his name gave the promise of a settlement. Whether it will be so to-morrow, I cannot tell. To-day he can save what can still be saved. But whatever is done, must be done with lightning speed, because speed proves *will*. His powers must be far-reaching. There must be no sticking at formalities. Even minutes are precious for people and Hohenzollern alike. We know what is at stake and what damage sins of omission and missed opportunities can do. Along with the depressing news the people ought to receive news of *a Majority Government which the Social Democrats have joined for the purpose of national defence* under a popular Chancellor.

It is the *last* resource of the wise physician.'[1]

He went to Haeften the same evening, full of reproaches against himself and others who had seen the disaster coming:

'We were too cautious and thought that the right ideas, if we gave voice to them, would go on working in the other people instead of seizing the other people by the collar and setting them going—as you, Colonel, should have done to your Chief, so,'[2]

and he caught him by the tunic and shook him.

The discussions in the Main Committee on the 26th and 27th[3] did not result in people losing their heads, as Haussmann had feared. But the excitement was great and the criticism merciless.

Herr von Hintze still tried to rouse hope of a favourable turn in Sofia:

Malinof, he pointed out, had not acted in concert with the King, the Supreme Command and Parliament, but had suddenly lost his head and had undertaken the peace step on his own. As a matter of fact the delegation had not yet left, and a reaction was noticeable in the Bulgarian population

[1] From Haussmann, *Schlaglichter*, p. 223 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[3] From reports of Boden, the Brunswick Ambassador. Cf. further *Deutscher Geschichtskalender*, edited by Ferd. Purlitz, 'Vom Waffenstillstand zum Frieden von Versailles,' p. 29.

against the peace step of Malinof's Cabinet. Considerable bodies of German and Austrian troops were already in Bulgaria to hold up the Bulgarian armies and bring them to a stand.

Scheidemann described the optimism of the Foreign Secretary as incomprehensible and implored him for Heaven's sake not to deceive himself on the situation.

'In a week workers' and soldiers' council may be sitting in this hall.'

This was the only sign of nerves to be observed in these discussions.

Erzberger quotes what purports to be a remark of Hussarek, the Austrian Prime Minister: 'Bulgaria is going home, Turkey will follow suit, and then Austria, too, will have to give in.'

The statement of the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Admiralty, Ritter von Mann, brought no reassurance. The new construction of submarines had up to now only slightly exceeded the losses. But a discussion which was now going on with the Supreme Command for the release of the necessary labour would put matters on a sound basis, and then by 1920 the requisite number of submarines would be available, so that he still believed that the submarine war would turn the scale of the war. These words are received in sorrow and anger. Noske calls it a devastating piece of news that matters are being thrashed out with the Supreme Command only now; Gothein speaks of a terrible disillusionment; Erzberger declares that the shortage of submarines is the most damning charge against Tirpitz and Capelle. Even Gamp regards the neglect of the Navy by the Supreme Command as 'scarcely credible.'

In the course of the 28th the Inter-Party Committee reached agreement on a programme. The most important results of the discussion were:

1. The Imperial Government is requested to summon the leading members of the Landtag of Alsace-Lorraine to Berlin to reach an agreement with them on a basis of autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine.

2. The Social Democrats and the Progressive People's party declare that they regard the repeal of Articles 9, 2 and 21, 2 [1] of the Imperial Constitution as the essential condition for the creation of a strong Government, resting on the confidence of the Majority, for the organization of national defence and for the bringing about of a peace of understanding.

The Centre party made its position clear by taking no part in moving the motion, but by allowing a free vote by the members of its group ; it declares that the Chancellor has still its confidence.

The National Liberals declared unanimously for the repeal of the above-mentioned provisions in the Constitution. The Progressive People's Party demanded the resignation of Count Hertling in words which clearly came from Haussmann's pen :

> 'The . . . demands which must be made . . . are in contradiction with the principles which Count Hertling has represented throughout his political career. The high respect in which they hold him as a statesman makes the Progressive People's Party hesitate to suggest to him that he should carry through such a programme. They will always think with gratitude of Count von Hertling's work in the highest office of the Empire and would further be grateful to him, if, in case he should decide to resign in the interest of the State, he would propose the appointment of a personality who would be ready to come to an understanding with the Majority of the Reichstag *on the formation of a government on a parliamentary basis to organise national defence and bring about a peace of understanding.*' [2]

This resolution was communicated to the Chancellor on the evening of the 28th, a short time before he left for Headquarters with von Hintze, the Foreign Secretary.

[1] Article 21 : Officials do not require leave of absence in order to enter the Reichstag. If a member of the Reichstag accepts a paid Imperial office, or a paid State office in one of the States of the Bund, or enters on an office in the service of the Reich or of a State to which a higher rank or a higher salary is attached, he loses his seat and his right to vote in the Reichstag and can only resume his position therein by a new election.

[2] Quoted from Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 288 (my italics).

The significance of Count Hertling's journey was not yet fully appreciated in parliamentary circles. At the sitting of 29th September the absence of the Chancellor was criticized.

Count Hertling was represented by Herr von Payer, Herr von Hintze by the Under-Secretary of State von der Bussche.

A representative of the War Office reported on the military situation in Turkey :

> ' The loss of Aleppo must be reckoned with. A timely retreat must therefore be considered, to avoid the cutting off of the Turkish troops south of Damascus.'

Hope of a favourable turn in Bulgaria was given up. On the other hand Herr von der Bussche tried to give plausibility to reassuring news which he had received from Vienna and Constantinople :

> ' In Vienna the exit of Bulgaria is not treated so very seriously. Hussarek had stated emphatically to Count Wedel that Austria would hold firm to the alliance. The Grand Vezir had declared to the German Chargé d'Affaires that the continuance of the present Cabinet and his, Talaat's, remaining at its head, were in no way endangered.'

This optimism gave rise to indignation among the Members. Stresemann claims to have quite other news from Austria. Dr. David goes so far as to say that the statement that the exit of Bulgaria was reckoned with but not treated very seriously, could only have been made by a politician who was off his head.

The Chairman of the Committee, Ebert, asks the Government, what it thinks of doing in view of the general situation :

> ' Austria, as had been ascertained in a conversation with the Foreign Secretary, had declared weeks ago that she was beaten and could not go on. No further reliance could therefore be placed on our allies ; every day was bringing us nearer to disaster. How did the Government judge the situation and what did it intend to do ? The people must be clear on this point ?

Von Payer, the Vice-Chancellor, replied :

'. . . The Government has clearly stated its line of action : we want peace and we mean to do everything possible to get it ; but that depends not on us alone but also on our adversaries.

The situation is very serious but we must not on that account throw up the sponge.

So far as Bulgaria is concerned, all that can be done at the moment is to use all military and diplomatic means and await their result.

In Turkey, too, we must await military developments.

In the West we must defend our skins as well as we can. We could certainly make no declaration tending to show that our strength is failing. In that case we are lost.

What is now at stake is the defence of our country in the narrower sense.

We are standing on guard, but we must not show fear.'

Payer's staunchness gave the meeting its stamp.
Ebert replies :

'All that he has in view is the terrible effect of this situation on the people. They must therefore know what the Government intends and whether it is in readiness to hold the people together when the worst happens.

Noske says :

'He and the Social Democrats in general were a long way from out and out pessimism. A peace at any price was not yet necessary. He still thought it possible that we would get clear somehow, but what he objected to was the continued optimism of the Government.

Boden, the Brunswick Ambassador, sent the following summary report on this meeting of the Main Committee to his Government :

'The attitude displayed by the Reichstag Committee in the discussions of these days may be summed up by saying that it can really not be reproached with faintheartedness and despondency. Rather it has shown—right down to the Social Democrats—that it wants to do everything in its power to keep hold of the situation and to give the army what it needs. Nor can it be reproached with nagging. On the contrary, if the grievances and charges of this morning are carefully

weighed, one is unfortunately compelled to say that the Reichstag's criticism of the failure of our diplomatic reporting and of the mistakes in the conduct of the submarine war is as fully justified as its complaints—whose justice the Chancellor himself admits—of the handling of the state of siege.'

I can only endorse and corroborate this judgment. All I would point out is that even under stress of the Bulgarian catastrophe and of our own deadly danger no will sprang up in Parliament to master the situation by its own strength. If the Majority now wished to take Germany's destiny in hand, it had to find a leader from its own ranks. But its members only begged the powers that be, and even implored them, to take the appropriate measures to ward off disaster.

On the morning of 30th September the resignation of Count Hertling became known. The Kaiser accompanied it with a proclamation, intended to usher in the ' Revolution from above ' ; an ominous phrase which had been used at Headquarters.

' Your Excellency has informed Me that you no longer consider yourself in a position to continue at the head of the Government. I will not resist the reasons you give and am obliged to forego your further co-operation with a heavy heart. Of the gratitude of the country for the sacrifice you made in accepting the Chancellorship at so grave a period and for your services you may rest assured. I desire that the German people shall co-operate more effectively than heretofore in the determination of our country's fate. It is therefore My wish that men who are supported by the confidence of the people shall take part in wide measure in the rights and duties of the Government. I beg you to conclude your work by carrying on the business of government and initiating the measures which I intend to introduce until I have found your successor. I look forward to your proposals in this matter.

Grand Headquarters, 30th September, 1918.

Signed : WILHELM, I.R.

Countersigned :

Dr. COUNT VON HERTLING.'

This proclamation whetted the appetite of parties and individuals. ' I beg you to conclude your work by carrying on the business of government and initiating the measures

which I intend to introduce until I have found your successor.' In this sentence Parliament was invited to consider the composition of the new Government before its leader was appointed. In all the democratically governed countries of the West the Prime Minister has a free hand in the choice of his colleagues. By this method of ushering in the ' Revolution from Above ' the idea of leadership was surrendered.

Herr von Payer [1] and Count Roedern immediately enter on negotiations with the party leaders in Count Hertling's place. Count Roedern still tries to gain support for the idea of a coalition ministry reaching from the Social Democrats to the Conservatives. But he has no success. The Majority refuses—mainly for reasons of foreign policy—to have the Right represented in the Government.

The discussions in the Inter-Party Committee on 30th September and especially on 1st October, present a completely altered picture. One misses the feeling for the dignity of the moment.

On the 27th the enemy offensive had still further extended its front of attack in the direction of Cambrai. On the 28th a powerful thrust in Flanders followed.

On the 29th the Hindenburg Line was broken into in its strongest sectors. The bitter struggle was not yet at an end and the army feared a breach as it had never done before. But in Berlin the whole day was spent in parliamentarising, and ambitions rose hour by hour.

Significant of the new turn of things is the attitude of the Centre. Groeber has up to now detested the word ' parliamentarisation.' He now demands as a matter of principle in the name of his party that the Majority groups must be represented in the Government in proportion to their strength. Haussmann tries in vain to apply the brake. ' We cannot dictate,' he says, ' who is to enter the Government.'

After the end of the Inter-Party meeting on 30th September —late in the afternoon—Herr von Payer goes on negotiating. Conrad Haussmann can again see no way out but to appeal to

[1] For what follows cf. also Payer, *Von Bethmann Hollweg bis Ebert*, Frankfurt a/M., 1923, p. 91 ff.

the help of Col. von Haeften. 'The Crown,' he said, 'must present a Chancellor at once. Payer, at Hertling's instructions, is still going on negotiating regarding the composition of the Government and asking the wishes of the parties. At this rate the Crown will soon be under the wheels.'

Haeften went at once to Herr von Payer in the Reichstag and asked him whether he himself was disposed to take over the Chancellorship. Payer said he was not. To the question whom he regarded as the suitable man he replied: 'Prince Max of Baden.' They agreed that the decision could no longer be delayed and that the man who was to form the new Government must come to Berlin. Payer begged Haeften to telephone in this sense to Headquarters and get the consent of the Supreme Command to the candidature of Prince Max.

When Haeften had got through to General Ludendorff on the telephone, the Field-Marshal was in the room. The two Commanders immediately gave their consent. Haeften was instructed to inform Herr von Berg, the Chief of the Civil Cabinet, as early as possible the next day—the latter was at the moment on his way from Headquarters to Berlin.

On the morning of 1st October the party leaders Ebert, Fischbeck and Groeber were asked to come and see Herr von Berg. Meantime the negotiations in the Inter-Party Committee were proceeding. According to Haussmann[1] the filling of the different offices and their distribution among the parties was discussed 'in a manner that was neither happy nor pleasant.'

'The number of portfolios to be disposed of must be arranged.'

'We claim the office of Vice-President, if the office is to be filled again.'

'Then the third must be a man from our party.'

'We claim a leading office.'

'If Moessle becomes an Under-Secretary of State we would put him down to us.'

'For the Colonial Office let it be Solf, only he must be put down to his party.'

[1] From notes by Haussmann; cf. further Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 231 ff.

A flutter was brought into these deliberations and calculations by the report which Ebert, Fischbeck and Groeber gave on their visit to the Chief of the Civil Cabinet—Berg, they said, had once more advised a Coalition Ministry. 'You are not the only people in the world.' After a vain push for Buelow in whom it was true the Kaiser had no confidence, Herr von Berg had proposed Prince Max of Baden. The candidature presented by the Civil Cabinet threw the Inter-Party Committee on to their guard; only the Progressives supported me. I had been on a visit to my sister, the Duchess of Anhalt, at Dessau for a few days. On the forenoon of 1st October I was called up at Herr von Berg's instructions and asked to come to Berlin at once.

The programme which I meant to advocate was sketched out. Its main points were these:

> 'No peace offer—but the clearest possible proclamation of war aims, in which large concessions could be made to the enemy. On the other hand insistence on our firm determination to fight to the death if dishonourable conditions were presented.'[1]

I took leave of my sister with the words: 'You can expect anything of me but a peace offer.'

[1] Other essential passages in the draft were:

'The entire solution of the crisis has to be approached from a single point of view—to clear the road to peace.

Reasons of internal policy demand a new spirit, a change of system, a change of men. But these internal reasons are secondary to the one task of solving this crisis in such a way that the enemy war will shall be weakened and the enemy peace parties given the platform for which they are waiting. . . .

The following are the factors which—intoxicated though the Entente is by its victory—are to-day pressing in the direction of peace:

1. The shrinking from a fifth winter of war. ("The will to war will not hold out through a fifth winter in blood and mire." *Common Sense*, 14th September.)
2. Fear in Britain of the replacement of British tonnage by American.
3. Fear of the preponderance of America in the Anglo-Saxon world.
4. Fear of an American victory next year and of Wilson in the rôle of Solomon.
5. Fear of industrial unrest. . . .

The following methods are needed to bring us to the conference table:

First the overthrow of the moral obstacles which confront us. Personnel must be selected from this point of view. The only possible

platform for us to-day is the peace of justice. This platform must now protect us against the lawless demands of the Entente (Alsace-Lorraine, etc.). We must put the enemy Governments in the wrong in front of their own peoples. But if this programme of justice is taken up by men who have formerly demanded Briey, Longwy and the Coast of Flanders or have made concessions to this policy by silence while we were winning and hoping that we could dictate a peace of force, then it will be easy for the enemy Governments to discredit the new programme as a mere sign of weakness and a piece of dishonesty.

We must form a Government of men in whose case there is documentary proof that they strove for this peace of justice even at the moment of our greatest victories ; . . .

We must compose the new Ministry with these ends in view ; our names are :

Payer, Ebert, Rechenberg, Junck, Schwander, Solf (or Brockdorff-Rantzau), Gothein, Harnack, Dernburg, Naumann, Haussmann, Fuerst Hohenlohe.'

To the Chancellery I thought of appointing :

Rosenberg, Simons, Kardorff.

As directors of publicity I thought of making use of Rohrbach and Deutelmoser.

It would be wrong, on grounds of principle, of party politics and of the effect abroad to eliminate the experts who have proved their capacity and who are indispensable in technical questions. The technique of business in certain departments must be known not only by the subordinate officials, but also by the ministers in charge themselves. Among such indispensable ministers are : Count Roedern, Hergt, Freiherr von Stein, Breitenbach, Eisenhart-Rothe, Drews.

' The Government must now perform a series of healing acts which would carry solid conviction over the world, precisely because they proceed from such a ministry :

1. The recognition of the Belgian question as a question of right with the necessary consequence that Germany is ready to indemnify Belgium.

2. To get the Representative Assembly of Alsace-Lorraine to move in the direction of autonomy. A great deal depends here on the *mise en scène*, hence Haussmann's special commission.

3. An honest policy in regard to the border states, a clean interpretation of the peace of Brest-Litovsk. A frame to be filled out. The filling out to consist of a test of the popular will in the occupied territories under forms which satisfy the world's sense of justice. For this purpose : the creation of democratic representative assemblies, self-determination ; but above all at the present moment honest work, especially in the matter of personnel—suitable men of humane character, withdrawal of the military administration, no dynastic solutions.

4. A demand that the question of guilt shall be handed over to an international commission after the war—a demand that the atrocity charges of the different nations shall be handed over to an international commission now.

APPENDIX I

(p. 89)

BRITISH POLICY AND THE PROCEEDINGS IN RUSSIA AS REFLECTED IN THE BRITISH PRESS.

(A Summary from Weekly Reports of the Central Office for Foreign News Service from the End of 1914 to March 1917.) [1]

First Phase

(To the End of 1915)

A clear instruction to the British Press :

'No interference in the internal affairs of Russia. The greatest care to be taken in the discussion of reactionary Russian institutions.'

By the newspapers of the Right this order was not only obeyed, it was even improved upon. The *Times* and *Morning Post* offered their salaams to Tsarism. (Cf. *Morning Post*, 27th January, 1915 : 'Russian atrocities are an invention of German Jews.')

The official *Westminster Gazette* obeyed the instruction, but only just. It did not join in the slavish glorification of the Russian reactionaries.

The Left Liberal Press, the *Daily News*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Nation* were often insubordinate ; they revealed attempts at russification in occupied Galicia, published news of pogroms, opened their columns to the oppressed alien peoples and frequently complained of the censor, who had issued orders that Siberia was to be hushed up.

(See Press Report of 9th February, 1915.)

[1] The reports referred to here and in what follows are printed and are in the Archives of the Foreign Office.

Second Phase

(End of 1915 to May 1916)

Uneasiness at the development of Anglo-Russian relations.

Establishment of a British Propaganda Committee in Russia. Instructions still given to the Press—no meddling with the internal conditions of Russia.

The *Times* of 19th December sketches a plan of operations for a great British Propaganda Committee in Russia. The existing organization, the ' Society of the British Flag ' is not adequate. Englishmen with a knowledge of Russian ought to start for Russia at once and set going an extensive propaganda of speeches and pictures.

The lower middle class and the people in the trenches must also be reached.

The main thing is to work up feeling against Germany and to advertise Britain. The *Times* still recommends that there should be no manner of interference in the internal affairs of Russia.

The dissent of the *Manchester Guardian* is noteworthy ; it is already demanding the closest co-operation between Russian and British Liberalism.

There can be no doubt that the propaganda organization was set up at Lord Northcliffe's instructions.

(See Weekly Report 1a, 1916.)

From now on the British news service on Russia improves from week to week, and the more the British get to know, the greater grows their fear of a German-Russian *rapprochement*.

I may mention the fright that Britain got at Sazonof's ' bolt into publicity,' when he issued his warning against the efforts to bring about peace between Germany and Russia, and the exceedingly suspicious welcome given to Stuermer, Goremykin's successor.

(See Weekly Report 2a, 6a, 7a, 9a, 1916.)

The old controversy between the British Liberals and Conservatives as to whether or not it is good policy to strengthen the Russian Liberals against the reactionary party

flares up on the occasion of a visit of Russian journalists to London (March 1916). On that occasion there was an encounter between a Russian Liberal and a Russian Conservative. Tgorof of the *Novoe Vremya* deprecates officious interference after the manner of Campbell-Bannerman's ' La Douma est morte, vive la Douma ! ' The Correspondent of the *Rjetsch* protests and declares it to be Britain's duty to help forward the ideals of progress and freedom in Russia.

(See Weekly Report 11a, 12a, 13a, 1916.)

But the Conservative point of view ' Caution in the treatment of internal Russian politics ' carries the day in Britain.

Still Britain has a magnificent staff of agents in Russia in her propaganda organization, a staff to which in a given situation different instructions might one day be issued.

Third Phase

(May to July 1916)

(*From the visit of the Duma Deputation till Sazonof's resignation.*)

Britain decides to strengthen the Russian Liberals by publicly agreeing to their national war aim, ' Constantinople.'

Professor Miliukof is made much of on the occasion of his visit to England in May 1916 ; a Liberal newspaper speaks of him as future Minister of Foreign Affairs in a parliamentary government in Russia. Miliukof drives in the fact that the Duma has at present to fight for its existence. It is in fact the Duma that has the chief credit for Russia's readiness to strike and only the Duma could have brought about the present friendship between Britain and Russia.

(See Weekly Report 20a, 1916.)

As a return for these services to the war and to the Alliance Miliukof asks and obtains permission to make public use of Britain's acceptance of the Russian war aim ' Constantinople.'

(See Weekly Report 29a, 1916.)

Note : It should be emphasized here that while the British

propaganda in Russia was enormously helped by this announcement, the Russian propaganda in Britain was hampered by it.

Pacifism in the British Labour Party has much for which to thank this visit of Miliukof's. 'Is England to fight in order that Russia may get Constantinople?' is the refrain at every peace meeting in England.

Fourth Phase

(July to Autumn 1916)

Britain realizes the necessity of intervening in questions of party and personnel in Russia.

Sazonof's fall (in July) brings about this all-important change of front. It was then realized that if the continuance of the Alliance was to be assured, Britain must have men in the Russian Government whom she could trust.

(See Weekly Reports 30a, 31a, 32a, 33a, 1916.)

Fifth Phase

(November 1916 to the end of the year)

Britain's open agitation for the Duma block after Stuermer's fall and Miliukof's speech in the Duma.

Trepof's entry on office brings no reassurance, since Protopopof's continuance in office appears to guarantee the continuation of the Stuermer course.

The following misgivings of British policy are expressed in the British Press with growing nervousness :

1. The Russian army will cease as a consequence of lack of munitions to be fit for the offensive ; even its capacity for a defensive is called in question.

Time and again Russia's lack of munitions is referred to, and is even openly admitted in Parliament.

2. The food crisis in Russia must sooner or later lead to revolutionary unrest, unless relief measures are taken.

Commenting on the report of its correspondent, M. P. Price, from Tiflis, dated 5th December, the *Manchester Guardian* points out that the food scarcity is beginning to make itself felt in the army.

(See Weekly Report 1a, 1917.)

3. The Protopopof regime not only cannot solve the food crisis and the munition crisis, but will not solve them; rather Protopopof and his people want to bring about social unrest and ' cripple ' the armies in their efficiency in order to have a pretext for making peace. (Cf. the cry of alarm in the *Times*.)

(See Weekly Report 44a, 1916.)

4. The German-Russian attempts at *rapprochement* ' are under way.'

Utterances friendly to Russia in German newspapers are quoted every day; at the same time detailed reports appear of Germanophile efforts by the Russian Court society.

Britain sees only one way to make the Russian army fit for the offensive and to keep Russian policy on the side of the Alliance—the Duma block must take charge. Unless that happens, a situation must sooner or later arise in which Germanophile reactionaries in Russia will be able to force a Russo-German peace. The whole British Press is unanimous in its opinion that British policy must do something. The *Times* and the *Morning Post* change front and begin to spur on the Russian Liberals exactly like the *Daily News* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Charges against Tsarism could be read in the *Times* which would have done honour to old Campbell-Bannerman.

(See Weekly Report 46a, 47a, 1916.)

From now on it becomes clear that the British propaganda organization in Russia has received instructions to stir up feeling against Germany, but above all to stir up feeling against the Russian Government.

The *New Statesman* points with great satisfaction to ' the politically important ovation ' which Buchanan received from the Duma majority.

At the same time it declares it to be symptomatic that the War Minister had pointedly sided with the Duma majority against the Prime Minister.

The *Manchester Guardian* ventures to say that a Miliukof-Gutchkof Ministry is quite possible.

Sixth Phase

(From the beginning of 1917 to the End of February)

Britain is no longer content with agitation for the Duma block but sends Milner to St. Petersburg to intervene.

The pre-history of Lord Milner's journey is as follows :

1. The British news service supplies admirable information of the excellent progress the Duma propaganda had made in the bureaucracy, the army and even in the Imperial family.

(*a*) After Rasputin's death Hamilton Fyfe revealed to the British public in the *Daily Mail* what the British Government had naturally known for a long time, that originally a Grand Duke had been chosen to assassinate Rasputin.

(See Weekly Report 5a, 1917.)

(*b*) And further that the Tsar was mistaken if he thought that the army stood blindly by him. Hamilton Fyfe *threatened* the Tsar in the following words : '*If the Tsar consents to summon such men to the work of administration* (i.e. *men who possessed the confidence of the people*) *the army will be satisfied, but only then.*'

(See Weekly Report 5a, 1917.)

2. On the other hand the British news service published message after message of concrete attempts to bring about a *rapprochement* between Germany and Russia. The Press even claimed to know all about them.

The *Nation* looks forward to 'an extremely painful diplomatic situation.' In London the 'depressing talk' of the approaching defection of Russia never ceases. (*Saturday Review*).

(See Weekly Report 2a, 1917.)

3. The British news service had fixed the great collision in Russia for the middle of February, when the Duma would meet. (*New Statesman*, 13th January, 1917.)

(See Weekly Report 8a, 1917.)

The Russian reactionaries, said people in England, wanted this clash to take the following course :

Food disturbances, their suppression by the reactionary Government, utilization of the internal confusion to make a Russo-German peace.

The *New Statesman* of 13th January says :

' If the reaction remains victor, even only for a time, troublesome complications might arise against which England must be on her guard.'

(See Weekly Report 8a, 1917).

England was on her guard, and so her strongest man, Lord Milner, set out for St. Petersburg.

Now, what was Lord Milner to do ?

He was to avert this clash or to shape it into a victory for the Duma. His mission was to persuade the Tsar to appoint a Ministry acceptable to the Duma and to threaten him if necessary with the discontent of the nation and of the army, if he remained obstinate. There can be no doubt that Lord Milner desired a bloodless change of Ministry undertaken with the approval of the Tsar. Milner went to St. Petersburg not to bring about a revolution but to check revolutionary unrest by timely yielding on the part of the Tsar.

Seventh Phase

(End of February to middle of March.)

The failure of Milner's mission.

It is already clear by the end of February that Milner's mission has failed. (Cf. Bonar Law's guarded declaration of 13th February, 1917.)

(See an article in the *Manchester Guardian* of 27th February.)

On the 26th the *Manchester Guardian* is already saying that the word ' revolution ' is on the lips of most observers of Russian conditions. The poem in the *Morning Post* with its appeal in Miliukof's name to the Russian people to anticipate

the blow which the reactionary Germanophiles intend to deal shows clearly that the British are now putting their hope only in a violent upheaval.

Britain saw only three possibilities :

1. Social unrest, suppressed by the reactionary party, *plus* a Protopopof peace, or

2. Social unrest *plus* a successful *coup d'etat* by the Duma block, or

3. Social unrest = Anarchy.

So Britain naturally preferred the violent upheaval in favour of the Duma block. After Milner's mission had failed with the Tsar the British staff of agents (advisers in the army, the fleet and the Ministries) will have done their best to see that when the inevitable revolts come, the Duma block shall gain control.

To what extent the British hoped thereby to keep the ' revolution ' within limits, we have as yet no means of judging.

But one thing is certain.

The Russian revolution as its course has so far been described in the German newspapers is a British defeat and not a British victory. The Western Powers have only felt comfortable in their calculations for the European fronts when they were able to count on the Russian army as an offensive force or at least as a reliable defensive force.

I recall the terrible depression in London and especially in Paris during the Russian retreat in the autumn of 1915.

It was then that ' Student of War ' in the *Manchester Guardian* coined the phrase :

' Hindenburg's victories have demolished the dogma of Russia's invincibility,'

and the same autumn of 1915 Lloyd George said :

' The Russian army, so far as this war is concerned, is a spent force.'

Even in Repington's war plan the co-operation of an efficient Russian army was always the condition of the success the Anglo-French ' Break-through ' offensive.

APPENDIX II

(p. 96)

MINUTES BY SIR EYRE CROWE AND ARTHUR NICOLSON ON BUCHANAN'S REPORT OF 24TH JULY, 1914.

(*Extracted from British Documents on the Outbreak of War, Vol. II, No.* 101.)

'The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia.

It is clear that France and Russia are decided to accept the challenge thrown out to them. Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Serbia, France and Russia consider that these are the pretexts, and that the bigger cause of Triple Alliance versus Triple Entente is definitely engaged.

I think it would be impolitic, not to say dangerous, for England to attempt to controvert this opinion, or to endeavour to obscure the plain issue, by any representation at St. Petersburg and Paris.

The point that matters is whether Germany is or is not absolutely determined to have this war now.

There is still the chance that she can be made to hesitate if she can be induced to apprehend that the war will find England by the side of France and Russia.

I can suggest only one effective way of bringing this home to the German Government without absolutely committing us definitely at this stage. If, the moment either Austria or Russia begin to mobilize, His Majesty's Government give orders to put our whole fleet on an immediate war footing, this may conceivably make Germany realize the seriousness of the danger to which she would be exposed if England took part in the war.

It would be right, supposing this decision could be taken now, to inform the French and Russian Governments of it,

and this again would be the best thing we could do to prevent a very grave situation arising as between England and Russia.

It is difficult not to agree with Mr. Sazonof that sooner or later England will be dragged into the war, if it does come. We shall gain nothing by not making up our minds what we can do in circumstances that may arise to-morrow.

Should the war come, and England stand aside, one of two things must happen :

(*a*) Either Germany and Austria win, crush France, and humiliate Russia. With the French fleet gone, Germany in occupation of the Channel, with the willing or unwilling co-operation of Holland and Belgium, what will be the position of a friendless England ?

(*b*) Or France and Russia win. What would then be their attitude towards England ? What about India and the Mediterranean ?

Our interests are tied up with those of France and Russia in this struggle, which is not for the possession of Serbia, but one between Germany aiming at a political dictatorship in Europe and the powers who desire to retain individual freedom. If we can help to avoid the conflict by showing our naval strength, ready to be instantly used, it would be wrong not to make the effort.

Whatever, therefore, our ultimate decision, I consider we should decide *now* to mobilize the fleet as soon as any other Great Power mobilizes, and that we should announce this decision without delay to the French and Russian Governments.'—E.A.C. 25th July.

' The points raised by Sir Eyre Crowe merit serious consideration, and doubtless the Cabinet will review the situation. Our attitude during the crisis will be regarded by Russia as a test and we must be most careful not to alienate her.'—A.N.

' Mr. Churchill told me to-day that the fleet can be mobilized in twenty-four hours, but I think it is premature to make any statement to France and Russia yet.'—E. G.

APPENDIX III

(p. 271)

LANSDOWNE'S SECOND LETTER OF 5TH MARCH, 1918.

A

Exposé prepared in the first half of March 1918 in the O.H.L.A. (Supreme Command, Foreign Section) :

The opportunity which Lansdowne's second letter once more gives to German policy.

1. Lansdowne welcomes Hertling's speech although not satisfactory in many points as a remarkable step forward :

> 'and the more remarkable because the speech may be regarded as a kind of rejoinder to the depressing announcement recently made (some of us think rather gratuitously) by the Versailles Conference.'

2. Lansdowne demands the continuance of the conversation. He lays most stress on a continuation of the discussion on Belgium. Here follow the two important sentences :

> 'Let the hope that "in the course of the dialogue" which will, no doubt, be continued, he will tell us whether that is his meaning, or whether wholly different designs, unhinted at in the Papal Note, were in his mind when he penned his somewhat unfortunate phrase. *The point requires clearing up, because, if Count Hertling's overture has been "turned down" this has been in great measure due to the interpretation which has been placed upon his reference to Belgium.*'

Lansdowne then continues :

> 'with an International Court in operation, there would not be much likelihood of such an abuse of the neutrality of Belgium.'

3. The declaration on the restoration of Belgium is clearly the healing act. Lansdowne next mentions the return of the conquered French territory as necessary.

> 'One German statesman after another has disclaimed a policy of conquest and annexation.'

4. Much more difficult are the territorial claims of France to Alsace-Lorraine, of Italy to certain Austrian territories and of England to parts of the Turkish Empire. These questions must be reserved for the international Peace Conference as also the question of the German colonies. A settlement of these questions as long as the war rages is impossible.

NOTE 1

The following facts merit attention :

1. Lansdowne wants to continue the conversation.

2. Lansdowne interprets Hertling loyally and requests Hertling to provide him with proof which will enable him to convince England of his loyal interpretation. He asks first of all for an authentic declaration on Belgium, but secondly also for an authentic declaration repudiating annexations in the West.

3. He declared Hertling's declaration on Belgium to be the main reason why Hertling's overture found so unfavourable a reception.

4. Lansdowne makes his *désintéressement* in the Eastern questions quite clear. He does this by mentioning Italy's and France's claims and reserving them for the Peace Conference while he says not a word about Russia.

5. There is no doubt that German policy is in a position to move Lansdowne to a new thrust. We can enable Lansdowne to say : ' Now we have a declaration of the German Chancellor which lays open the way to negotiations.'

It is the third time that Lansdowne has spoken. He would not do this if he were isolated. He has large sections of Labour, of the Liberals and influential classes of Conservatives behind him.

He has dinted the British home front. If he makes one more thrust, it is pierced.

It is a military need that German policy should give him the opportunity to effect this penetration before the offensive so that our coming military successes may produce their greatest possible effect.

NOTE 2

(*a*) In this connection a remark in the *Nation* of 9th March is important. After giving unqualified approval to Lansdowne's letter it comments as follows on Lansdowne's failure to mention the East :

> ' Its (the Lansdowne Letter's) weakness is that it ignores the East. *We do not suggest the return of the borderland to Russia (much of it does not desire that solution). But the Entente, if it aims at anything better than Imperialistic barter, must insist on securing here the reality of independence and self-determination.*'

(*b*) The *New Statesman* of 9th March also assumes that Lansdowne has no wish to interfere with Germany's ' unheard of annexations ' in the East.

NOTE 3

(*a*) For the question what lies behind Lansdowne's will to peace a remark in the *New Statesman* of 2nd March is of importance :

> ' Lord Milner's pacifism has struck others besides Hertling as peculiar.'

(*b*) In this connection the comment of the *Manchester Guardian* on 5th March must also be mentioned :

> ' I suppose a good many people who rallied to the Lansdowne Letter and who read closely and carefully the speech which he made a few weeks ago in reply to the political memorial presented to him, must be wondering whether he has gone back into retirement and indifference. *I am able to say that he has not.* He is taking a most active interest in the questions which he raised in his letter, and is following the situation very closely. I do not think that we have heard his last word yet.'

It should also be mentioned here that the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* was one of those who presented the address to Lord Lansdowne at his residence.[1]

[1] See above p. 238, n.

(*c*) In this connection the following paragraph in the *Nation* of 9th March must also be mentioned :

> 'The Labour Party cannot and will not form a Government by itself ; but it will, I think, lend its aid to an Asquith-Lansdowne Coalition ; and the periodical *Common Sense* prophesies a Lansdowne Ministry in February.'

NOTE 4

The *Westminster Gazette* of 5th March :

> 'We are most willing that he (Lord Lansdowne) should pursue his investigations ; and if he can prove the German mind to be better than we think it, and can induce Count Hertling to study and understand the necessary point of view of the Western Powers, we shall most heartily rejoice. But the ideal war-aims which we profess require us to be quite honest about the facts, and to make sure that the enemy will not, in paying lip-service to our principles, deceive us, as he has deceived the Russians.'

In this exposé Lansdowne's noteworthy comment on Lord Milner's speech was omitted. It runs :

> 'Let us note, in the first place, that Count Hertling ends with a cordial reference to the speech delivered on 21st February by Lord Milner at Plymouth, a speech which he regards as "still more conciliatory" than that made by Mr. Runciman in the House of Commons. Lord Milner is a member of the War Cabinet ; he is under no suspicion of desiring a German peace. His speech is instinct with courage and determination, but he recognizes that, in the torrent of oratory with which the country has lately been flooded, "we have seemed sometimes to get into rather a tangle, to be putting forward too many propositions, to be putting our total claims perhaps rather too high. Simple people in this country have sometimes been rather confused by talk about readjustment of territory in distant parts of the world, about future trade arrangements, and so forth. All these are details, very important details, which will have to be settled when we reach the stage of negotiations. But they are all subsidiary to the main object, which is the securing of human freedom and just and enduring peace."'

B

Statement by the *Nation*.

On 9th March the *Nation* interprets Lord Lansdowne's words as follows :

'What Lansdowne says amounts to this : "*You* (*Count Hertling*) *offer a form of restoration of Belgium. Does it come up to our policy of complete independence and integrity? Is your qualification a claim for a German Protectorate or economic control, or a protest in advance against a similar claim from the Western Alliance?* Let this point be satisfied, either by a continued dialogue overseas or by an informal meeting."'

The *Nation* then continues :

'We cannot enter a general Peace Conference while the sovereignty of Belgium remains in doubt.

But neither have we a right to refuse an entry unless we are in a position to demand a German surrender on the second order of difficulties, the irredentist and national questions.

We did not go to war to cancel the Treaty of Frankfort or to deprive Austria of Trieste. Our intervention was on the special case of Belgium.'

APPENDIX IV

(p. 291)

OPINIONS GIVEN BY BRITISH POLITICIANS IN 1921.

(From a letter from E. D. Morel, written shortly after his first serious illness.)

'CHERRY CROFT,
3rd December, 1921.

. . . All that I can say is, that in my opinion an unequivocal declaration on the part of Germany in regard to Belgium would have been decisive. I am awfully sorry I can't go into further details now, it is physically impossible and this is the last letter I shall write for the next three months. . . .

I am very sorry I cannot develop my own views at greater length—because interesting and valuable as the memoranda of my colleagues are, they do not, in my opinion, cover the whole ground —and I don't wholly agree with them. . . .

Finally, in my opinion Germany held all the cards—when she sat at the conference table at Brest-Litovsk. A generous Peace of conciliation and understanding with Russia then, coupled with a positive statement with regard to Belgium, the whole flung in the face of the world with a great gesture, would have re-established her moral position in the world, and exploded a mine under British public opinion (Labour especially) already badly shaken.'

MEMORANDUM BY CHARLES TREVELYAN, M.P.

The object which I pursued during the war was the formation of public opinion. Consequently I did not follow or care to try to influence privately the views of the governmental people. I felt sure that they would respond to any formidable growth of a feeling of the necessity and possibility of a 'peace by negotiation.' Neither we nor Prince Max were working 'either on illusions or facts.' We were working to create a new situation which, as facts went, never came into existence. But that did not make us wrong in our estimate of what might have been. It makes it, however, in my opinion, impossible of proof that our policy was ever near success. The secret of how near or how far we were from success lies in minds of scores of thousands of our fellow-citizens,

who alone can tell us how near they were to saying to their rulers : ' Stop ! ' Remember that most of these people would now say : ' Quite right to go on. We always knew we should win.' That, however, wasn't at all their humour many times during the war. All I can say to Prince Max is that he was trying to do the one thing which in England could have created a new atmosphere. If a German Government, when it offered to try and negotiate a peace, had equally definitely guaranteed Belgian independence and sovereignty, it would have changed the whole issue here. It would have created a powerful peace party, backed by many of the opportunists. It must be said, however, that as the war went on it would have been harder, not easier, to get peace even by the clear surrender of Belgium. Reasonable public opinion grew less powerful in Britain, the custom of the war grew upon people, they set their teeth and thought less. But even after America came in, the tide might have been turned to peace by so startling a falsification of what was represented by our war-mongers as being the attitude of the German governing powers. If the offer had been made dramatically enough by Prince Max as Chancellor, it would have been increasingly difficult to maintain the position that victory was essential to a reasonable peace. To my mind the only proof that there was a volume of moderate opinion capable of action under more favourable conditions is the Lansdowne Letter and movement. I even think that it might have gone much further than it did, if Lansdowne had been a more vigorous and popular personality, less conservative and cautious in his methods. His position made it impossible for him to be silenced or misrepresented. And, if his proposition, that a reasonable peace was actually attainable, had been proved by the open abandonment by the German Government of the one thing which the British rulers had persistently taught the British public was the main reason of the war on the part of Germany, he would have been the leader of a powerful party.

In history the importance of the part played by Prince Max and his associates in Germany and by ourselves in Great Britain does not lie in how near we came to success under the conditions in which we strove for a policy of reconciliation. It lies in the existence in both countries of bodies of men, pursuing under such difficulties an identical policy, certain if successful to lead to peace, because based on the same assumption. It is to be hoped that there will be a record of our efforts, in order that it may be known that there were men who believed in human reason when only blind patriotic passion seemed to rule, and who had so much faith in the common instincts for good in their own countrymen

and their enemies that they dared to base their whole action on that faith.

MEMORANDUM BY ARTHUR PONSONBY, M.P.

Your questions are not easy to answer with any precision. Answers must largely be a matter of speculation. I will give my view for what it is worth.

Generally speaking the influence of the U.D.C. during the war period was exaggerated abroad. This is quite intelligible ; such movements are always magnified on the opposite side. But U.D.C. influence must be divided into two parts—(1) influence on opinion, (2) influence on policy.

(1) While in no way wishing to overestimate our influence on opinion, we were undoubtedly the only force operating intelligently and systematically in the direction of peace by negotiations, and we certainly attracted a fair number of people who in their various spheres were influential. We never had the herd with us —our followers were more or less picked men and women. But the best way to gauge our influence on opinion is to remember the active steps that were taken by the authorities against us. (Imprisonment of Morel, refusal of halls for meetings, suppressions of literature, inspired Press abuse of our leaders, and actual circulation from official sources of material to refute our arguments.) In fact, the authorities were frightened of us because they saw we had influence, specially with Labour. If, therefore, at the end of 1917 or the beginning of 1918 Lloyd George had definitely veered towards peace, I should say that we could have roused a large if not a sufficient body of support for him.

(2) Our influence on policy was practically speaking nil. To influence policy in this country you must have spokesmen or anyhow one leader who holds or has held some high position. MacDonald it is true had been Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Trevelyan had been in the Government, but neither of them were sufficiently prominent to command attention. The rest of us, some of whom were known publicly, were also not recognized as leaders of public opinion. In all the Parliamentary debates the Government regarded us as utterly negligible, and our attacks merely gave them an opportunity of expressing their extreme views. Neither Asquith and Grey nor Lloyd George and Balfour paid the smallest attention to what we said. This, of course, does not mean that we should not have gained great parliamentary strength, had circumstances turned in another direction. Because throughout our arguments were listened to by the House as a whole with patience and often with attention.

Had there been an unequivocal declaration from the German Government on the subject of Belgium—that undoubtedly would have strengthened our position enormously. The whole Lansdowne movement would have been infinitely larger and more effective and (taking this point quite by itself) it might have been the turning point; and the weight of opinion by the end of 1917 of those who were tired of the war would have almost forced the Government to respond favourably to advances from Germany.

But a declaration with regard to Belgium is not the only consideration that must be taken into account. The military situation was really the governing factor throughout. I believe there were moments of deadlock of which advantage might have been taken, but there were far more moments of success or failure on one side or the other, and these moments were very unfavourable for any hopes of negotiation. The soldiers kept silent on the subject of policy, they never indulged in the foolish and provocative outbursts of politicians, but behind the scenes their control was paramount. . . . I do not at all agree that Lloyd George was 'always a hopeless case.' But I am not certain that an unequivocal declaration on Belgium at the end of 1917 would have been necessarily successful. It certainly would have brought round a very large section of moderate opinion and tired and exhausted sections of the people, but as to whether it would have been sufficient to overcome not only the determined generals and their militarist supporters but opinion in France (for France did not care two straws about Belgium) is doubtful. At the same time it would have produced a division of opinion and this would have made the vigorous prosecution of the war much more difficult for the Government, who might therefore have been inclined to listen to reason.

I have dealt solely with the point about Belgium, because I think that is the only one about which I am doubtful.

351 – I placed myself at the Kaiser's Disposa

368-9 v. Berg (Oct. 1.) goes up to Berlin to form a

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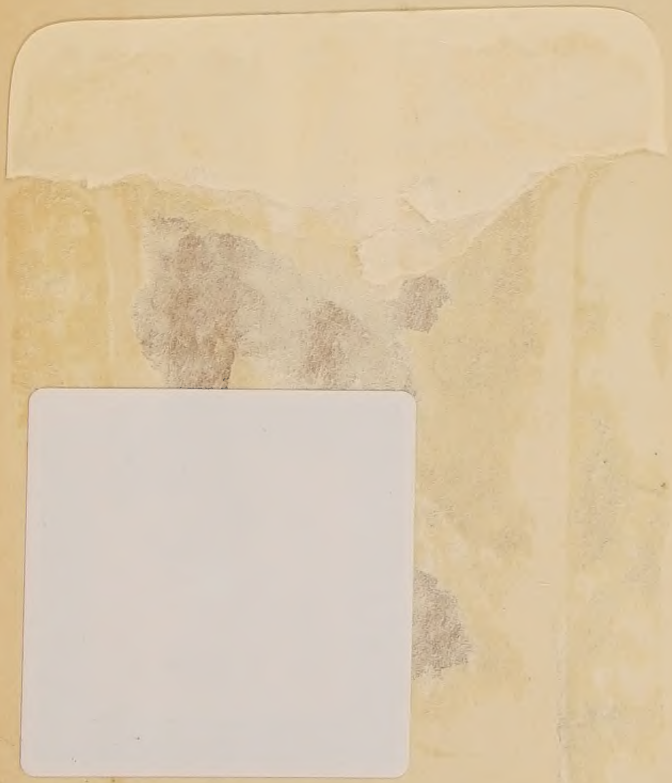
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